

# **PLAYING WITH THE WRITTEN WORD:**

**Examining the impact of *role* to improve writing in a primary classroom.**

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## **Abstract**

*How can role be used to impact upon the motivation of student's writing?*

*Can learning in a creative context cause change in students' writing?*

There is a body of literature that examines the use of drama to facilitate development in literacy, and some of it addresses writing. However, most of the classroom based studies in this literature have been undertaken by drama specialists who have extended their curriculum interests to broader fields such as social studies and literacy. Their work has offered a challenge to classroom teachers who are not drama specialists to explore and adopt relevant process drama approaches. This study has been conducted by one such teacher and as such it brings a new and different perspective to the research and to the growing body of knowledge.

The current education system has placed strong importance on managing student levels of achievement in writing with the National Standards being introduced as a way of reporting student progress in this area as well as that of reading and mathematics. The Standards aim to make parents more aware of where their children sit in regards to the National levels.

Consequently this thesis adopted an assessment format that incorporated the National Standards to assess change in surface and deeper features of writing.

The students involved in the study were from one Year Five and Six classroom in a decile ten contributing school in Christchurch. They completed questionnaires at the beginning of the study and were interviewed at the end to survey their thoughts on writing and drama. The classroom teacher was also interviewed to gain her views on student levels of motivation in writing and their needs in the classroom. A series of lessons were then facilitated involving the use of process drama to encourage the students to think independently and tell a story through action before they put pencil to paper. Observations were written during each lesson documenting student responses and interactions to the drama and writing samples and student journals were also collected. A systematic analysis was completed on students' writing to measure change in their writing features over time. These methods were also followed by the classroom teacher in order to measure reliability of the assessment.

Writing samples and student feedback indicated strong improvement in motivation levels and engagement in each task through increased lengths of writing and use of subject-specific vocabulary and emotive language. Results also showed a creative teaching approach can be an effective facilitator of certain aspects of writing in children working at different levels and that the National Standards can be incorporated smoothly and reliably within this type of assessment.

Overall, the findings from this study highlight the use of drama as an instructional tool in writing and support the conclusion that these strategies can be incorporated into the teaching of writing for more effective instruction.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 The Writing Challenge

Writing is an essential part of schooling and requires proficiency to be used across all subject areas (Troia, 2011). However, writing results in standardised tests for literacy in many countries are dropping (Ministry of Education, 2012c), highlighting it as the “most neglected of the three Rs” – Reading, writing and arithmetic (Troia, 2011) with possible causes for falling results being a lack of interest and knowledge in the area. Graves (1994) suggests that motivation is a vital part of learning writing and as teachers we must get to know our children and what interests them in order to rectify this global issue as “writing competence is crucial for success both in and out of school” (Troia, 2011).

As a teacher, I have found the usefulness of classroom-based writing resources to be limited when employed in a passive environment (i.e., an environment where children are not actively engaged). Even with some initially powerful ideas, the overwhelming task of correcting their work can result in poor effort from students. Such difficulty in maintaining creativity and motivation in writing, while adhering to surface and structural elements of the task is also reported in the research literature. For example, Dunn and Finley (2010) showed that even with strong ideas, students’ lack of knowledge regarding writing structure and editing hindered their fluidity and creation of an imaginative text; this can result in a lack of motivation for the writing task leading to uninspired work that doesn’t make sense grammatically (Dunn & Finley, 2010).

Researchers have begun to explore the effectiveness of teaching approaches that exploit the connection between motivation and writing achievement to enhance the written skills of students in the classroom. Using drama in the classroom is one such strategy that can provide an important context for improving literacy skills, including writing (Cremin, 1996; Flennoy, 1992; Laurin, 2010), as it increases student interest in the topic through participation leading to increased understanding. Although previous studies have focused more on the effect of incorporating drama on improving the use of writing strategies and the ability to write in a range of genres rather than student engagement, in this thesis I aim to investigate the influence drama has on the motivation of writing and its effects on writing achievement.



## 1.2 The Introduction of National Standards

The New Zealand education system currently faces the challenge of elevating reading and writing outcomes for all children. In particular, national testing in writing has shown results to be below the expected margins with 30% of students “not doing so well” (Ministry of Education, 2012b). PIRLS (progress in international reading literacy study) provides a 5-yearly international comparison of primary school students’ literacy achievement (Ministry of Education, 2012c). The most recent PIRLS results show a “comparatively high percentage of reading failures in New Zealand” (Tunmer et al., 2008), believed widely to have been triggered by a “one size fits all approach” to instruction and intervention in literacy, which indicates a need for further change in the education system. Appearing even more critical is the writing performance of New Zealand students when compared to their results in reading (Locke, Whitehead, Dix, & Cawkwell, 2011).

New Zealand data mirrors international findings of a comparative weakness in writing for students. E-asTTLe (2012a), an “online assessment tool, developed to assess students’ achievement and progress in reading, mathematics, writing” has the purpose of providing teachers with information to inform better practice and student learning. Recent results from E-asTTLe show an increase in mean writing scores from Year Five to Year Eight but indicate a significant tail of students are still writing below expectations (Ministry of Education, 2012a). Adding to this, Locke et al (2011) argue that there is an imbalance of reading and writing achievement in New Zealand resulting in writing development falling behind that of reading.

The current government initiative to improve classroom achievement is a set of guidelines for teacher assessment known as the National Standards. The standards are the initial step of a “ten-step crusade” (Crooks et al., 2009, p. 2) to regularly assess every primary and intermediate student in literacy and mathematics and report to parents about “how their child is doing compared to national standards and compared to other children their age” (p. 2) in reading, writing and mathematics.

Many schools opposed the introduction of the National Standards arguing that they would reduce creativity in the classroom because of their focus on the three main learning areas and in addition to this some teachers have felt reluctant to apply the standards to their teaching. Despite such reactions, the National Standards state that students need to be able to use their reading and writing as “interactive tools to meet specific learning purposes across the curriculum” (Ministry of

Education, 2009a), suggesting the importance of strong assessment in these areas as well as their integration into the wider curriculum.

Although this thesis is focused on investigating the use of drama to motivate writing I will also be addressing the National Standards and providing an example of a workable framework that would meet the requirements of reporting the standards in writing using a creative teaching approach.

Drama in education is a mode of learning and through active identification with imagined roles and situations in drama, students can learn to explore issues, events and relationships (Lambert & O'Neill, 1990, p. 11) and will write with more imagination when in role (Greenwood, 2010). The New Zealand Curriculum also suggests that through working with drama techniques (see definitions of key terms) students learn to communicate confidently with increasing control (Ministry of Education, 2007d).

### **1.3 Context**

This research investigates and reports the use of role in a dramatic study and how it can impact upon students' writing within a variety of contexts. The study was completed in a classroom that the researcher frequently taught in and involved the whole class with the aim of using drama as a learning media. The study addressed the idea that students can experience and observe a fictional world and a real world at the same time by moving in and out of roles and the researcher worked alongside them as both facilitator and participant. The teacher student relationship was vital in this experience and resulted in learning occurring in a social context (Miller & Saxton, 2004, p. 24). The context of writing in role was also apparent in this research with the students writing before, during and after the teaching units. Writing features adapted from the school writing progressions and integrated with the National Standards were assessed at the beginning and end of each unit and compiled using a tabulation system to show individual progress as well as make comparisons between the participants. This gave the umbrella context of developing literacy.

### **1.4 Rationale**

This study aimed to investigate whether combining a drama and writing programme impacted on student motivation and engagement with the further intention of seeing whether the demands of teaching writing under National Standards could be met whilst using a creative teaching approach. While there is a significant amount of literature in this area, in my experience teachers are not

aware of how to use these techniques with confidence. The main intention is that this study will contribute to existing literature and provide teachers with knowledge to develop better education for students through the integration of drama and writing.

There is a need to increase understanding of the possibilities of drama in the classroom and improve teacher confidence in this area as well as create a focus on the potential that drama can offer to the National Curriculum. There is also a need to meet the demands of the National Standards for student achievement which could be accommodated easily within any classroom as standardised tests such as PIRLS are showing that student levels in written language are not progressing as expected.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

Arising from these needs, the questions that focus my research are:

- 1. How can the use of dramatic play be manipulated by teachers to impact on the motivation and context of writing?*
- 2. How can key elements of writing be monitored to show improvement?*

Qualitative and quantitative methods were chosen to create a strong balance of descriptive and empirical data for this research. Although substantial evidence for more drama can be found through the qualitative data, including positive participant feedback and a rich description of the process, underpinning this data with systematic benchmarking against the National Standards allows the reader to identify student progress made as a result of the research.

To monitor progress I chose key features of writing taken from the participant school's own writing progressions and integrated them with National Standards requirements. Although research suggests deeper features of writing are more likely to change in response to drama based instruction (McNaughton, 1997; Ewing et al, 2011; Warwick, 2012), I focused on both surface and deeper areas to compare the effectiveness of drama as it would be of more benefit to the teaching community if a change was identified in both features. The writing features I adapted were:

- Use of Punctuation
- Correct use of Spelling words

- Correct use of Paragraphs
- Sentences written; including simple, compound and complex
- Use of Subject-specific vocabulary
- Use of Emotive language

## **1.6 My Role within this Study**

A researcher is as much a part of a study as the participants. Therefore my own position within this project is one that requires identification. I came to this research as a teacher, with the progress of students of utmost importance to not only the children and my career but also me personally.

I am an emergent researcher. I began a journey in designing this study and it reflects my own experiences as well as the students I worked with. I started with the idea of facilitating one teaching unit and recording the impact of drama upon writing with the aim of pursuing a prominent qualitative study in which I would collect and analyse student experiences. I initially decided upon a less extensive, second approach using a quantitative methodology that used a basic table to analyse features of the students' writing. However, as the study grew, I found the need to expand my thinking to encompass the learning of myself and my participants. I decided that the initial study would not give the required comparison of results nor the time the students needed to learn in a dramatic context. In adaptation I included a second unit and introduced the National Standards as a focal point for my analysis deciding that features from these, such as writing characteristics and sentence structure would be pertinent to my own and others' continued education because of their current importance in assessment.

My position in the research was that of a facilitator and an observer. When students were working independently, for which the unit offered increasing opportunities, I recorded observations and field notes adding a rich description of the environment to my research. Within each lesson I was also involved as one of the participants working alongside the students with a role in each drama; ensuring a stronger student teacher relationship and allowing me to reflect on the process of each lesson, a necessity in practitioner-based research.

## 1.7 Definition of key terms

The following terms are widely used when teaching drama and can be found throughout this thesis when describing any of the drama activities.

**Agency:** When students show ownership, engagement and responsibility towards a role, therefore promoting their own learning.

**Assessment:** The process of gathering, analysing, interpreting and using information about students' progress and achievement to improve teaching and learning.

**Drama:** Fiction represented in performance.

**Framing:** Focusing on the drama from one of three distances:

- Inside the event (the people to whom the event is happening)
- On the edge of the event (people who are connected to or affected by the event but not central to it)
- Outside the event (people who are from another context)

(O'Toole & Dunn, 2002, p. 14)

**Hot seating:** A process convention in which class members question or interview someone who is in role (for example, as a character from a play, a person from history) to bring out additional information, ideas, and attitudes about the role. The class members may or may not be in role. (Arts online, 2012)

**Improvise:** The practice of acting, singing, talking and reacting, of making and creating, in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one's immediate environment and feeling.

**Mantle of the Expert:** A process convention in which the participants become characters endowed with specialist knowledge relevant to the situation of the drama. The situation is usually task-oriented so that expert knowledge or understanding is required to perform the task. (Arts online, 2012)

**Pretext:** The "hook" that activates the drama. It could be a story, an image, a headline, a song or any number of different things. (Arts online, 2012)

**Process Drama:** A form of drama in which the purpose is to participate in learning, inquiry, or discovery rather than to present drama to an external audience. (Arts online, 2012)

**Role:** The imaginative identity taken on by an actor. (Arts online, 2012)

**Teacher-in-role:** A process convention and teaching strategy where the teacher manages a class from within a drama by taking a role to deepen and extend students' inquiry and learning. (Arts online, 2012)

**Vignette:** An improvised scene refined to capture a snapshot of a moment. (Arts online, 2012)

**Year of Schooling and Curriculum Levels:** Capitalisation is used when Year and/or Level refer to the formal stages of schooling as detailed in the NZ Curriculum Framework. When lower case is used that reference is not intended.

## **1.8 Overview**

The research was positioned as a case study aimed at increasing student motivation and engagement in writing through the use of drama. When drama is used in this context the students become part of the story requiring them to take ownership for the task at hand and develop a sense of social responsibility. Students are permitted to make informed choices and become involved with their teacher making the task personally meaningful.

The tasks introduced were process dramas with aligning writing tasks. The first teaching block involved learning about the New Zealand Pioneers and then using that knowledge to complete written tasks across a range of genres. The students were an integral part of the learning, having to explore and manage roles and make decisions. They were in role as the Pioneers, exploring the situation and adding to the experience. In the second block the Canterbury Earthquake was brought back to life and the class were now in role as city business owners who had lost their buildings and their incomes. For the purposes of finding new premises to re-establish their businesses they needed to persuade the council to let them take over new property that coincidentally was the student's school. The class had a role of importance which allowed them to decide how the drama played out, even though it was based on historical evidence. This enabled them to write with fluidity as the knowledge they gained through the drama was vast supporting the argument that drama is experiential; it provides realistic and purposeful experiences for students (O'Toole & Dunn, 2002).

Discussion is woven throughout this thesis and is based on samples taken from student writing, interview transcripts and observations. Where it is relevant discussion links these findings to literature in the field. In Chapters Four and Five such interwoven discussion gives rise to a narrative format. This allows a tracking of the processes in the teaching units, the shifting perceptions of both students and teacher and immediate critical reflections on the outcomes in motivation and writing. In Chapter Six a tabulation of selected student's results have been included to indicate student change across writing features related to the National Standards, and the implication of these shifts in performance is discussed at the end of the chapter.

## **Chapter Two: Review of the Literature**

This chapter focuses on key literature that informs the areas of drama and writing that are the subject of this research. Internationally there has been considerable work, in practice and reported in the literature, involving drama processes to motivate and focus writing but there is still limited report of such practice in New Zealand. This review therefore scans international and New Zealand literature on the broader fields of drama and writing, examining significant literature and drawing connections between the concepts and findings discussed in those works and the current research project. Literature is also briefly reviewed attributing to the recent introduction of the National Standards in New Zealand schools and the role they play in assessment, particularly that of writing. The fields of drama and writing include a variety of strategies and tools that can be used in many ways to engage students and provide rich learning opportunities; whilst a broad range of different strategies could be utilised for different teaching goals, this review focuses specifically on using process drama as a tool to create motivation and context in writing.

### **2.1 The Act of Writing**

The act of writing is an essential skill and people need to be able to write for a variety of reasons. Letters and emails allow us to stay in contact, stories and poetry can express emotions and even writing a list for shopping can help us to stay organised (Smith & Elley, 1997). However, Graves (1994) suggests that learning to write requires personal motivation and when students write in class the joy can disappear as the purpose of the task becomes a need to prove they are able to use correct writing conventions. Add to this a sense of burden from teachers who feel pressure from a public that worries about grammar and spelling and the more dominant fear of parents that their children will be marked as under-achieving. This attitude can then be passed onto children making the expectation of writing an even more arduous topic (Graves, 1994).

Learning to write differs greatly from that of learning language. Although infants speak through imitation and language becomes a natural string of words thrown together to make sense in a conversation, the essential act of writing involves using separate words that are dependent on conventions such as spelling, punctuation and paragraphs; and for children this can provide a major challenge (Smith & Elley, 1997).



Cioffi (1984) suggests learning to write involves developing a set of technical skills that are essential, including spelling and handwriting and that children need to practise composition and grow in their ability to orally communicate ideas. He argues that written language is “based on symbols acceptable within a certain environment and children first learning to communicate their ideas do so in the form of pictures, an antecedent for the structure of writing”. Other researchers propose that writing evolves naturally for many students through the drafting stages and the sharing of ideas with their peers. For example Loane and Muir (2010) argue that children’s lives are full of prior knowledge that they can use in addition to their imagination to add depth and interest. “When we really understand and believe that ourselves, we can lead our students into their own realization that they can make sense of the ‘stuff of their lives’ as they respond, talk, wonder, muse – and write it down” (p. 15). Graves (1994) adds that a teacher who knows their students well, including their prior knowledge and their limitations will have much more success extracting those ideas in the form of writing. He claims a teacher who takes part in the lesson, listening to the children and writing with them is modelling the correct way to learn.

Adding to teacher knowledge, Smith and Elley (1997) maintain that a range of teaching styles and topics is also required for students to feel motivated about the task of writing. For example when children take responsibility for their own learning, they will feel more ownership, resulting in learning that is less dictated by the teacher and therefore more natural. Smith and Elley consider this an aspect critical for student motivation (1997).

Opposing this view, Beach and Bridwell (1984) ask ‘does instruction really have any bearing on students’ writing?’ They argue that students learn how to think rather than how to write and with practice, all students will naturally progress in their writing ability with or without input. Graves (1994) expresses that children are more able than we think and when given the responsibility to learn independently they can show great progress. However, writing is a complex and difficult process involving a range of strategies and writers learn this process in a variety of different ways and Beach and Bridwell stress, with any teaching, it is student attitude that is crucial when it comes to writing.

Whether writing evolves naturally or is the result of a strong teaching programme, national testing such as PIRLS and E-asTTLe have shown levels in literacy to be falling. To improve the assessment and reporting of these areas the current initiative by the Ministry of Education has been the

implementation of the National Standards (Ministry of Education, 2009a). The standards have resulted in controversy since they were introduced in 2010 with many schools querying their validity, arguing that they result in extra work for teachers and unreliable marking methods. These disputes are based on the concept that levels are indicated not only through classroom-based assessment but also on teacher judgements for which assessment tools provide information, meaning a possible discrepancy between teachers and schools. In addition to this has been added worry from teachers that the “measure of the standards’ worth and value will be based on their students’ performance” (Ozerk & Whitehead, 2012, p. 549). The Ministry’s rebuttal to these accusations is the standards provide a “nationally consistent means for considering, explaining and responding to students’ progress and achievement” (Ministry of Education, 2009b, p. 4).

In a paper discussing the 2008 education (National Standards) amendment act, a number of principles have been proposed that should “underlie the design of an assessment, analysis and reporting system based on them; and makes several suggestions for supporting their development and successful implementation” (Crooks et al., 2009, p. 2). The eight key principles are: 1- promoting the educational progress of all students, 2- optimising the positive impacts of the strategy on students’ learning, 3- minimising the negative impacts of the strategy on students’ learning, 4- making the standards evidence-based and achievable, 5- ensuring that teachers’ professional expertise is utilised and enhanced, 6- Acknowledging the right of parents to be well informed, 7- adopting a solution that suits New Zealand, 8- valuing multiple sources of evidence (Crooks et al., 2009).

The standards promote students using reading and writing and are intended to help “organise their thinking, construct and create meaning, communicate information and ideas in print and reveal their developing knowledge” (p. 5) as well as enabling students to become more reflective about their learning.

In the following sections literature is reviewed that discusses the use of drama to motivate writing. It is pertinent to note that many of the following studies which are focused on the incorporation of creativity into methods of teaching writing promote similar principles to the National Standards, for enabling the development of writing skills.

## **2.2 Motivating and Engaging Young Writers**

As suggested, the act of writing can become a chore for students when it appears to them to serve no purpose. Literature indicates that in order to learn students need to be motivated and engaged during a lesson (Smith and Elley, 1997; Graves, 1994; Loane and Muir, 2010) and while there are many proposed ideas that could have an impact on students' literary interests, the above theorists have all published works stating that purpose is indeed a motivator for writing.

To further position themselves in this view Smith and Elley (1997) convey that in creating purpose children must participate actively in a lesson or curriculum event if they are to learn, whether it is critiquing a peer's work or writing for an audience. In their research Smith and Elley focus on the different skills students require to learn to write and stress that frequent immersion is a key tool in acquiring this technique. "If students are to learn to write they must be surrounded by print, they must be read to and they must have access to books and notices and songs and poems and environmental print. They need ample access to good quality text" (Smith & Elley, 1997, p. 58).

Loane and Muir (2010) suggest that routines established during writing lessons also serve to keep students engaged, for example feeding back ideas to peers after hearing their work. This indicates to children that feedback is important and to complete the task, they need to listen intently to what is happening during the lesson. In an article more than twenty-five years ago, Wagner (1985) agreed, suggesting that creating a purpose for writing will result in the best outcomes for children. Through effective classroom experiences children use language "not primarily as passive imitators, but as active agents constructing their own coherent views of the world" (Wagner & Clearinghouse on Reading Communication Skills, 1985, p. 2).

One of the many tools suggested by literature to motivate and engage children within writing has been that of drama. To further explore the benefits of creative learning upon the writing curriculum, it is pertinent to review research completed in this area. A study by McNaughton (1997) aimed at finding out if drama gave a context and purpose for developing skills in imaginative writing. Questioning was an integral part of the study and a variety of drama techniques such as improvisation, hot-seating and hearing the thinking of characters were incorporated to involve the children in discovering new meaning of the topic. McNaughton found after analysis that the input of drama resulted in improvements in the amount written, more

success with appropriate word choices and a stronger ability from the participants to identify with their written characters.

McNaughton's study was focused on students questioning each other during the drama, often in role and working in groups to promote engagement in the task. Lambert and O'Neill agree this is an important aspect of any drama but to grow and change peers working alongside each other during a drama activity need both motivation and self discipline. They suggest that both of these will allow students to work with integrity of feeling and thought, therefore producing a better result than if taught otherwise (Lambert & O'Neill, 1990).

So can drama indeed be a motivator for writing? O'Neill (1995) argues that the experience of drama is what engages students to learn, and process drama in particular, with its range of role taking and lack of pressured acting techniques, allows students to feel more at ease and therefore motivated to learn (O'Neill, 1995). A number of theorists have completed studies on the possibility of process drama engaging children in learning including Wagner (1994) who worked with children to determine the effects of drama on developing persuasive writing based on an interest in the relationship between oral and written language. Her participants were split into three groups which received one of three types of instruction: 1-role playing prior to writing, 2-direct instruction prior to writing, 3-no instruction. Wagner found that the group who had experienced role-play wrote significantly better persuasive letters than the control group who had participated in basic class instruction. Process drama has also been shown to have a positive influence on children's fictional writing. McNaughton (1997) used qualitative and quantitative measures to study the effects of drama upon children's imaginative writing. Participants were in two groups and received the same teaching style and content but group A was taught using drama and group B were taught using discussion only. McNaughton found that while drama was a useful tool for developing children's imaginative writing skills it also gave a context and purpose to their writing, resulting in a much richer outcome. Both Wagner's and McNaughton's studies align with the aim of this thesis, to create a motivational context for students to improve their writing through the impact of drama instruction.

## **2.3 Drama and its Impact on Learning**

With an already packed curriculum teachers can find it a challenge to fit teaching drama into their

daily classroom life. However, studies examining the effects of drama education indicate that a drama inclusive classroom is an important one to aim for. Drama offers a dynamic and safe learning context that nurtures possibility, thinking and qualities such as innovation, play, depth, development, and self-determination (Lin, 2010, p. 109).

The New Zealand Ministry of Education has often identified drama as being an area of importance for learning, yet recently the National Standards and their focus on reading, writing and mathematics have taken precedence. In 2006 The Ministry of Education published a resource for teachers entitled *Playing our stories* (Ministry of Education, 2006b) which contained activities focused on the use of drama and how it can be integrated into the classroom and related to the rest of the curriculum. The resource provides easy-to-read activities that teachers can access for year levels 1 – 6 and suggests there was an importance placed on using drama in the classroom and creating opportunities for children to make meaning for the purposes of achievement.

The current curriculum expectations in New Zealand drama education are outlined in the revised New Zealand curriculum which was published in 2007 (Ministry of Education, 2007d). Within the arts section of this curriculum there is an emphasis placed on students constructing meaning for themselves through the use of drama. “As students work with drama techniques, they learn to use spoken and written language with increasing control and confidence” (Ministry of Education, 2007d, p. 21). In this area the Ministry seeks to display the arts as a subject in its own right but also one that can have a vital effect on students’ learning, teaching them to work independently and collaboratively, respond to others’ views and use imagination to engage with unexpected outcomes. Drama also links neatly with all five key competencies of thinking, using language symbols and text, managing self, relating to others and participating and contributing. These are interwoven throughout all learning areas in the curriculum as capabilities for life-long learning. Nonetheless, there have been no updated Ministry documents for use in the classroom to create links between drama education and other areas.

There have been independent publications and one of those is by Greenwood (2005) who proposes that drama is a practical suitcase into which teachers can pack the curriculum. This idea suggests that all subject areas could be taught through various strategic applications of drama and aligns with Smith and Elley’s earlier suggestion that a variety of teaching styles can lead to motivation and McNaughton’s (1997) view that drama in primary schools is now not seen as a

subject in itself which gives an outcome, but rather as a method of helping students to learn when integrated within other areas. This is an incentive for teachers wanting to teach in a more creative way.

In a parallel view with Greenwood, Bolton (1985) sees drama as a link to other curriculum areas and also gives reference to the Ministry's proposal that drama can work alongside our key competencies as an undercurrent to the learning of social skills. He conveys the idea that when students are involved in drama some kind of learning will occur and adds that in addition to this drama can bring confidence and self-esteem to the students as well as improve their communication and problem-solving skills.

Greenwood and Bolton advocate for drama to be used in the classroom to encourage and motivate students and in turn support their learning and understanding of a number of curriculum areas. However, even with the possibility of improvement using drama as a teaching tool must also depend on the students themselves being committed to the drama and the desired outcome (Tarlington, 1985).

Bolton (1979) aims to define the kinds of learning possible through drama based on his own teaching experience. He suggests that in play and drama there is "obvious learning potential in terms of skills and objective knowledge, but the deepest kind of change that can take place is at the level of subjective meaning" (p. 31). Bolton continues to point out that in fact the greatest use of drama in the education system is 'drama for understanding', using drama in such a way to aid the students' understanding of what they are learning from the teacher. Aligning with this is McNaughton's view of the power of a student teacher relationship during drama activities. Together the class and the teacher are learning in a stimulating, emotional and educational environment. A far more open and less conventional way of learning than often exists in school situations (McNaughton, 1997).

The above theorists all promote the benefits of using drama in the classroom and praise its beneficial impact on learning. Another advocate for this style of teaching and learning is Ackroyd who developed a book for teachers based on using drama projects for literacy learning. "In drama, the children are allowed to talk themselves into believing in the fiction of the story, to hear their ideas bounced back, to reframe and refocus their own information and attitudes, to recognise the need for communicating what they believe to those who believe differently, to actually hear their

own language at work” (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 11). Ackroyd outlines a variety of methods by which children can learn when involved in drama in the classroom.

## **2.4 Enhancing Oral Language and Writing with Drama**

Many authors recognise the connection that exists between drama and learning (e.g., Bolton, 1895; McNaughton, 1997; Ackroyd, 2000; Greenwood, 2005) and emphasise that the use of drama processes aids motivation, creates a context for writing, and results in better outcomes for students. McMaster (1998) suggests that the strength of drama is the variety of communication experiences it offers to students allowing them to think out loud, develop their oral language skills and express their thoughts and ideas during improvised activities.

McMaster also specifies the degree of language skills that would be improved through drama, suggesting that as students take on a variety of roles they experience the chance to improve their speaking skills which cultivates their oral language development; a crucial aspect of learning to read (McMaster, 1998). This is echoed in Vygotsky’s theory of child language development that “when children’s activity consists entirely of play, it is accompanied by extensive soliloquizing” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 24) which is identified by many theorists as a prerequisite of developing language.

Another technique which uses drama to inform education is Heathcote’s Mantle of the Expert which places students in a drama as they imagine themselves in professional roles in which they are engaged in a high status project for a fictional agent (Aitkin, 2009). In an article based around this approach, Heathcote (2009) details her perception of the paradigm as an alternative (though sometimes used alongside) to other forms of education. She describes the Mantle as encouraging leadership and professional type education in which students are involved in language, reading and writing, giving a realistic element to the drama and preparing students for future social events in their lives.

Bolton (1979) supports Heathcote’s teaching methods, describing them as the “best example of drama work operating at the level of subjective meaning [without requiring] it to be sensational” (p. 31). However, he indicates that teachers adopting this method would need to ensure students are emotionally involved in the drama in order for it to change their attitude and increase learning and understanding; “in other words teachers would need to work at the subjective meaning level”

(Bolton, 1979, p. 32).

The above ideas identify drama as a learning tool, yet are more based around improving oral language and understanding rather than writing. Many theorists in writing development have made claims for drama based upon Vygotsky's suggestion that early child's role play and gestures are an indication of the process of language development and McNamee et al. propose that activities involving drama are crucial to the development of early literacy because they allow reading and writing as a communication process (McNamee, McLane, Cooper, & Kerwin, 1985).

Classroom writing comes with the expectation that students must prove their understanding of text conventions and the ability to use these within all forms of functional and imaginative written work. Much of this is prompted by teacher instruction and often provides no background for the writing task so drama serves as a powerful learning medium because it can provide context for students across all genres of writing (B. J. Wagner, 1994). As well as giving context to a task, drama provides a visual and physical experience for students, expanding their minds in role as they imagine the world they are creating and often internalise the mental images they create (Bolton, 1979). Ackroyd (2000) agrees saying that drama is the "act of crossing into the world of the story" (p. 13) and that when children share drama they enact as if it were true building their knowledge of the subject.

As seen above drama has an advantageous effect on students' learning when it comes to written and oral language. This thesis focuses in particular on the inclusion of process drama in order to create context and motivate learning. Crumpler and Schneider (2002) performed a study focused on facilitating a process drama based on the picture book 'Where the wild things are' (Sendak, 1963) as a pretext for writing. Students developed their own characters, discussed what would happen on their 'journey' and then had to write and draw based on their discussion. As mentioned earlier, students need inspiration for writing to inspire ideas that will flow, in turn leading to more focused learning in broader areas. "Understanding, using, and creating oral, written, and visual texts of increasing complexity is at the heart of English teaching and learning" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20).

Mentioned earlier in *Mantle of the Expert*, Heathcote identified inspiration as being an enhancer of literacy when she debated the theory that students need experiences from which to learn. Heathcote maintains that experience helps students to appreciate qualities in humans, animals,



plants and the amazing range of the corporal world and these qualities are vital to learning. She argues it is important for students to experience a range of stories covering all aspects of life with both good and bad perspectives (Heathcote, 2009). Students' story ideas come from their experience and prior knowledge; drama can help children to understand that experience further and use it to identify with their own situations as well as further their dramatic experiences.

Tarlington (1985) agrees with Heathcote's theories and in a study demonstrating ways in which a dramatic context can give students a defined purpose for writing, she explained that the use of drama can help students to express their thoughts and feelings in a variety of writing processes ranging from personal diary writing exercises to the more formal and public business letters. This suggests that Tarlington supports the view of students engaging more readily in the writing process when they are immersed in a meaningful situation and encouraged to communicate their ideas.

In the study reviewed earlier detailing the effects of role playing on the persuasive writing of students, Wagner (1994) found that children who role play produce writing significantly stronger than that of their peers who had only instruction. Classroom role playing for the purpose of developing both oral and written language is extremely effective in promoting language to students that is appropriate for a variety of real-world situations. "Drama is really about the opportunity to expose the inner structure of social existence" (Heathcote, 1988, p. 2).

Process drama does not require a script, yet it "evokes an immediate dramatic world bounded in space and time, a world that depends on the consensus of all those present for its existence" (O'Neill, 1995, p. xiii). Process drama can be used in a variety of ways, perhaps with the most well-known of these being in the classroom. Using process drama in a different context, O'Connor (2007) adopted a case study approach facilitating workshops with participants working in the mental health system to shift "workplace attitudes and behaviours that were discriminatory or stigmatizing" (O'Connor, 2007, p. 2). He followed the model of a process drama and focused on reflections that came within this context, in particular the "impact on people's attitudes to mental illness" (p. 4). This study parallels to a classroom situation where reflection is an important part of a child's learning process and advertises the extent to which process drama can be used to gain results.

Drama is about exploring, discovering, creating and performing, it is one of the central ways in which children can learn about the world and is one of the world's major art forms (O'Toole & Dunn, 2002). Drama allows teachers to turn their classroom into almost any place and time they choose and from that, create situations in which students can learn from and enquire about. Miller and Saxton (2004) have found in their experience that students listen to each other and the teacher differently during drama lessons because they 'need to know' what is happening in order to understand their situation, and Baldwin and Fleming state that "drama is a shared and cooperative activity which fires the individual and collective imagination" (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003, p. 6). Through their research Baldwin and Fleming have found that children's "early literacy skills thrive in the imaginative play area" (p. 9) because it involves a strong element of story-making and re-enacting fundamental to later literacy development, suggesting this type of learning has an effect on what students take in and therefore what they put out in their writing. Although much of the work reviewed in this chapter gives a variety of accounts of progressive teaching methods using drama to create context and engage children, there is limited work studying the effectiveness of this work in the classroom. This thesis aims to contribute to the growth of such studies by giving more grounded evidence through the use of student and teacher voice and detailing the outcomes of the impact caused by the inclusion of drama into the classroom.

## **2.5 Recent Research in the Field of Drama and Writing**

Internationally much work has been completed on researching the impact of drama and its benefits to reading, writing and oral language. More recently however, there has been less input into researching drama and its effectiveness on writing and learning. As mentioned, government initiatives are encompassing of the idea of integrating the arts (Ministry of Education, 2007d) yet research studies into this area are difficult to find. The following studies have looked into the area of using drama as a springboard to children's learning. While not all of them are linked to specifically improving writing, they do give examples of how drama can encourage student motivation and result in more learning in the classroom.

Dennison (2011) is an advocate for using drama to aid writing in the classroom. She recently wrote an article outlining her studies in which she argues that drama strategies are useful tools for the

literacy teacher. Dennison also speculates that students participating in a dramatic context are rehearsing exactly what they are going to write about and includes student feedback in her article to emphasise that drama gives children a purpose to write as well as words, ideas and feelings to use in their writing (Dennison, 2011). Dennison also gives examples to inspire teachers including fairytales from which she has created process dramas and the illustration of lessons where students participate in improvisation and move in and out of role to write letters, make decisions and ultimately improve their learning.

Continuing the context of creative learning, Lin (2010) studied the impact of drama on children's everyday creativity in an Asian context. Lin designed and taught lessons aimed at enhancing this in two classes over ten weeks and although her study is not linked categorically to writing as this thesis has an emphasis on, it still had the anticipation of igniting student curiosity and improving their creative learning skills in a "relaxed and playful context to learning" (p. 112) which follows the prerequisites of a drama programme. The findings were based on student voice and were collected through response sheets, interviews and diary entries and showed that children found drama to be useful in developing their imagination, independent thinking and risk taking. A number of strategies were documented in Lin's study which included task-orientated collaborative learning and guidance by the teacher, all resulting in a positive outcome for the research.

Baraldi (2009) researched the advantages of creating a conducive environment for the language acquisition by non-English speakers through creative methods. Like Lin's research this study was not explicitly about writing. However, the research has similarities under the areas of motivation and engagement and the appeal of using drama to aid learning. Baraldi also used similar data collection methods to run a case study in one classroom over a six week period. Drama strategies were used in Baraldi's study to encourage children in the following ways: 1-engage conversation, 2-encourage cooperative learning, 3-form groups, 4- promote writing, 5-incorporate body use, and 6- utilize students' prior knowledge (p. 5).

Through the collection of field notes, observation and student interviews Baraldi found that overall students enjoyed being involved in the drama sessions and were able to learn and apply content through their involvement. Student engagement is linked to learning and experiencing drama can lead to this engagement (O'Neill, 1995).

More recently Ewing et al. (2011) reported the findings of an Australian study into the development of a programme entitled 'School Drama'. This programme was created through partnership with the 'Sydney Theatre Company' and focused specifically on "developing primary teachers' professional knowledge of and expertise in the use of process drama with literature" (p. 33) in order to extend children's outcomes. Eleven classrooms in a number of schools were involved in the research which required teachers to work cooperatively with a trained actor, after the teachers had taken part in an initial workshop engaging them with a range of drama strategies. As the research progressed teachers took more control for each lesson, therefore growing in confidence as they promoted talking and listening, narrative structure, and descriptive writing among a large amount of other desired literacy outcomes. The findings of the research resulted in participant teachers reporting "a range of positive outcomes both in terms of their students' literacy development and their own professional learning" (Ewing et al., 2011, p. 36).

## **2.6 Recent New Zealand Research in the Field of Drama and Writing**

Two current New Zealand theorists with an interest in the use of drama to motivate writing are Marino and Greenwood. Marino (2012) recently completed a case study focused on using drama as a pedagogy for teaching writing in a New Zealand classroom. The study included a small group of children and taught drama and writing lessons to investigate how the students' writing responded to the input of drama. Marino's findings suggest that an imagined context such as drama provides students with a context where there is an authentic need to write and the sessions resulted in improved student engagement giving rise to a strong personal voice in their writing (Marino, 2012).

Greenwood identifies five specific strategies and processes as tools "particularly useful for contextualising and animating text and thereby motivating learners" (Greenwood, 2010, p. 123). The first is *agency* - where students take "responsibility for making something" and through this become "invested" in the procedure. Greenwood indicates that many classroom atmospheres are passive learning environments where students see learning as simply "following the teacher's instructions". The second tool Greenwood has identified is the *exploration and management of role* - allowing the exploration of "someone else's situation" which is seen by students as a safe exercise because it is the role that gives the answers, not the individual.

The third tool is *framing* - one of many dramatic strategies which enables “emotions, problems or conflicts to be explored within a frame” (p. 124). This is a particularly powerful strategy in that it holds the frame “separate from the real life of the participants” while still allowing intensity. The fourth tool is the processes needed for *analysis and deconstruction* -allowing students to manipulate frames in order to “tease out the text and subtext to develop back story”. In this way students can see the event from a different point of view and “envisage different outcomes”.

The fifth tool is *performance* - rehearsing and building up to a presentation in front of “witnesses” which in a process drama may be planned or spontaneous (p. 124).

More recently a report by Greenwood and Sæbo (2011) tracked the use of interactive, creative and aesthetic approaches to teaching and learning and how they may be adapted to cross-curricular teaching with their report focusing, in particular, on the development and improvement of reading, writing and second language competencies. In one example a process drama was used as an approach into a science fiction novel and was an action-based intervention taken with six classes involving both teachers and students. Greenwood and Sæbo’s findings were a wide improvement in motivation for reading with 70% of students reading the book at the end compared to only 1/3 reading more or less of the book at the beginning of the study. More interesting was the classes showing the least interest in writing at the start of the study showed the most improvement at the end, indicating a strong positive reaction to the drama input (Greenwood & Sæbø, 2011).

Greenwood sees drama as being both a strong motivator and a powerful reinforcement for learning. She believes that through role students are able to perform tasks that they can then take into real life and “as they take the mantle of expertise in drama, they begin to preview and celebrate the results of the learning they are engaged in” (Greenwood, 2010, p. 127).

As shown in this chapter there is a variety of research focused on the impact of drama upon learning. However, few studies have looked explicitly at the links drama has with writing improvement and the motivation that can come from teaching this subject in a more creative manner. The purpose of this study is to build on the above works and add information to this field in the form of practitioner-based research to consolidate the benefits of drama in motivating and engaging students to write. In addition to this it aims to encourage other classroom practitioners to try these methods and provide examples of writing analysis based on current information

gained from the National Standards initiative to further exemplify the advantages drama can add to this area.

## Chapter Three: Methods and Sources of Data

This research project places drama as a pedagogical methodology. The teaching units and lessons were focused around the incorporation of drama and how it influences the motivation of students during a writing task. However, this chapter is focused on the research methodologies used. The main research tool for this study employed a qualitative-type approach in order to capture children's reflections to answer questions about the usefulness of drama within the writing curriculum. A second methodology using a quantitative approach required obtaining writing samples from the participants and analysing them systematically against the National Standards. Although this research did not involve tracking the long-term development of participants' writing ability or improvement, it seeks to describe rich learning journeys and add knowledge about students' perceptions of drama and its links to writing.

The purpose of this research was to explore the impact drama could have on inspiring children's writing. Drama is perhaps most well known as a method of teaching creatively and has traditionally been viewed as a subject in itself; particularly one that involves acting out plays and running theatre groups. However, as mentioned in Chapter Two McNaughton (1997) says that drama in primary schools is now viewed more as a method of enabling students to learn when integrated within other areas. Drama can be used in many ways; as a process for teaching, for presenting findings and also in the form of analysis. This study explores the changes that occur through using drama to motivate students and as a context for writing.

Through personal experience I have found writing to be a large area of need within the New Zealand education system. In my introduction and literature review I made reference to the disproportionately high numbers of students who are underachieving in writing, reading and mathematics, resulting in the subsequent commencement of the National Standards, an initiative put in place by the Ministry of Education in 2010. The quantitative reporting methods the standards require has caused debate amongst school communities but these extra demands do not rule out teaching in a creative way. Therefore, I decided to explore this area further and identify ways the standards could be integrated more usefully into teaching and assessment, specifically within the area of written language. Incorporating quantitative methods enables the comparison of results at different stages of the research (Thomas, 2003).

This approach placed me as a reflective practitioner with the outcome of improving my own teaching skills. When we focus our teaching on academic foundations it is far more rewarding and robust and our development as teachers becomes that much stronger (Green, 2011). Being a reflective practitioner focuses you on developing your understanding of the subject you are teaching and pushes the desire to explore the “wide range of ways learning can be mediated and enhanced” (p. 1).

### **3.1 Participants**

To research drama and its effect on engagement more thoroughly I followed a case study approach and worked with one class in a school I have taught in for the past four years. This gave me the added benefit of a pre-formed relationship and ease of communication with the participants as well as a strong knowledge of the students’ capabilities prior to the study. The students were Year Five and Year Six and learning at a wide range of levels. I worked with the whole class during this time, however of the 28 students, three did not grant me permission to use their information for the study, so any quotes, journals or writing used in this research is from the 25 students who did give consent. Although I initially focused on students struggling with the writing process, further consideration led to the inclusion of higher ability students, as even though their writing strategies were more advanced, there was still room for improvement in the area of motivation. In consultation with the classroom teacher, I taught the whole class as opposed to extracting small groups which would cause more disruption to the students and timetable than was necessary. The teaching sessions also formed the writing part of the class timetable for the four weeks I was with them, enabling the teacher release time.

### **3.2 Ethics in Research**

When conducting any type of study the researcher holds a certain type of power. However, this is especially apparent in qualitative research where many studies are “personalistic” (Stake, 1995, p. 46). Stake identifies the need to constantly consider privacy working with participants as there is an issue of power that can arise.

Reminding us of the ethical issues that must be considered throughout all stages of the research is Kvale (1996); for example it is of the utmost importance that all participants are informed as to the intention of the research, the proposed outcomes and expectations of their involvement over that



time. In working with children there was a need for informed consent from the students, their parents, teacher and principal. It was necessary to seek permission regarding the drama study and assessment and the issues of voice recording and written transcripts. Students needed to feel safe at all times and be assured the environment was one that they could work and learn in. I also needed to ensure a clear understanding that I would not use their ideas unfairly and if uncomfortable with anything, the participants were entitled to, and had the opportunity to, remove themselves from the research at any time. This understanding ensured that the collection of data involved only those genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely (Shenton, 2004). With the involvement of students there needs to be an easy out and the knowledge that they can end involvement in the project if needed. There should be assurance that anonymity will be kept and if a publication is to be made, permission will be sought. To ensure this for the participants in the research I created a package of information including written consent forms to be signed by all parties if they were willing to take part as well as informative letters outlining the study and what was to be expected of them. Bell (1994) suggests that we need to establish choices made in assessment practice are consistent with the obligation to act with honesty, integrity, due care and fundamental fairness to all involved in the assessment or affected by its results. Once ethical approval was gained I confirmed participant anonymity by asking the students to select pseudonyms for themselves based on their characters in the initial teaching unit. Those pseudonyms are used throughout this report.

Conducting research in a class I also taught in meant I had responsibilities to the students (and their parents) and also to the school and principal who has expectations and requirements of me as their employee. I was required to progress these students in the curriculum areas which I was responsible for, so it was important that any research I undertook was not at detriment to their learning or risked the students' chances of success. Those students who opted not to participate in the research also required consideration, as any work they produced during classroom activities could not become part of the data collection. In addition to this I needed to be sure that research processes allowed the students to think freely without any manipulation from me as a prior relationship with the students might result in them modifying any responses they gave to ensure the 'correct' or expected answer.

### **3.3 Framing the approach**

The research was framed as a case study as it was completed within one classroom in one school allowing me to use specific data-collection techniques and approaches suitable to a real-life context (Yin, 2003). A rich description of the process indicating participant voice and data in the form of personal responses to the research was pertinent, as the research was mainly based on increasing motivation and context for learners. Through this I was able to document changes in attitude in the children's writing as well as interviews and personal journals that recounted their views. I balanced this description with systematic benchmarking against the National Standards by analysing writing samples and documenting any changes in writing features after the drama input. This involved the collection of pre and post data on a table which was then counted and compared to show change across the course of the research.

The study was conducted in two teaching units running in term one and term three in one school year. Each unit was comprised of daily teaching sessions for two consecutive weeks with each session lasting ninety minutes incorporating a range of drama tools and writing activities. After deciding to complete one set of teaching sessions in term one, I adapted the study to include a second unit. This was to indicate a more identifiable change in the students' writing after the first data collection appeared weak in its coverage of writing activities. The research required students to employ a variety of roles and externalise the behaviours and thinking of their characters which gave a rich context for the writing and ensured understanding of the task, resulting in a stronger motivation to write in a range of genres, including diaries, narratives, newspaper articles and recounts.

To maintain curriculum continuity within the classroom I based the teaching units for the study on topics being covered in class. The first of these was focused on the New Zealand Pioneers and their colonisation to a new country, leading into a second unit on rebuilding of Canterbury and sustaining Christchurch after the earthquake. To give the students a more in-depth view of the Pioneer's journey on the Charlotte Jane ship and help them better understand the topic, the event and characters became part of a process drama of which the students were in role. As the drama progressed the students created characters and family groups and their writing included diary entries, newspaper articles and narratives following their 'experiences' on the journey. I observed positive changes in participant engagement during the drama and the classroom teacher reported

their writing was at a level much more proficient than they would have achieved without the dramatic input.

The research resulted in noticeable highs and lows and the collection of student journals reflected this, with students writing that their engagement during drama activities resulted in more motivated writing. A more passive editing activity involving students sitting and listening resulted in an evident lack of interest and I noted many students made the comment in their journals that they wished the lesson had been more concise – however necessary it was. Nonetheless, this decline in motivation did not reverse the effects already established by the drama and recovery was quick with their writing showing evidence of their gained knowledge.

As mentioned I chose to facilitate a second study to collect more writing samples in order to better show comparisons over time. In the same classroom I began a unit based around the Canterbury Earthquake. There were tensions surrounding the decision to conduct this unit as I didn't want to encourage bad memories; however, I knew the whole class had personal experience with this event and therefore would be able to recall on that knowledge to support their writing. After discussing my apprehensions with the teacher she assured me no children were negatively affected by the earthquake.

Teaching sessions were run in a similar way to the Pioneers unit, with the collection of motivation charts and journal entries to encourage continuity. Children were in role as Christchurch business owners, school parents and community members for the drama. The prospect of a school closure was announced due to the lack of space for businesses in Christchurch and through framing within role children were able to identify with the intense emotions of these characters and work towards debating and convincing the council of their opinions on the proposed changes.

The second unit included a stronger focus on writing with less concentration on teacher-in-role and freeze framing. This transpired in increased group discussion and debate resulting in stronger ownership from the children and therefore a richer understanding of the task. The conclusion of the second unit came with an abundance of information to compare; including a second set of interviews and four sets of writing samples from the focus children.

### 3.4 Data Collection

As the classroom teacher I was fully immersed in each lesson and driving the pace and drama. However, the support of a teacher-aid enabled me to write daily observations which I then expanded into field notes once I left the classroom. These field notes made reference to each drama and writing and included my reflections and student responses. They allowed me recall information and events over the course of the research. Data was also collected in the form of student interviews at the end of each teaching unit to capture their reactions to the research and their attitudes towards writing and drama. The interviews were conducted in a group to ensure the safety and comfort of the students rather than being in a one-on-one interview with me and allow them to prompt each other on what had happened. Each interview was videoed after gaining approval from the students to allow easy transcription and to recognise who was talking at any one time. In addition to the interviews the whole class was given a questionnaire prior to beginning the study, enabling me to compare growth in their responses. Excerpts from the interviews and questionnaire have been used in the 'Learning Journeys' chapter.

Prior to beginning the research I interviewed the class teacher to gain insight into the students' strengths and weaknesses in writing and their ability to learn both individually and collectively as a class. Although the teacher did not take an active role during the drama and writing sessions, the majority of the time she stayed at her desk working and informally observed the lessons, meaning that when she and I discussed the sessions casually, she was able to give me her own thoughts about how the students were progressing.

Further to the data above I also collected writing samples, daily journal entries and daily motivation charts from the students. I wanted a range of material to show each aspect of student learning. The writing samples allowed me to analyse and compare changes in the writing over time as well as record any improvements using a table analysis. The interviews and journal samples gave me an indication of student voice in addition to indicating their understanding of the topic and feelings towards each of the teaching sessions. The journal entries were written independently by the students at the end of each session to gather more honest responses from the class and give the study trustworthiness. Motivation charts were included in the first data collection with the aim of recording student changes in motivation across the two weeks. However, I found after graphing their responses that they gave limited attestation to how the

students felt about writing and instead seemed a creative outlet for colouring in patterns. I chose to keep them in the data collection merely for the purposes of continuity and opted to leave their results out of this research.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The initial step of my analysis involved writing detailed accounts of each teaching unit to show processes used and record the learning journey of the class. These accounts were included to “establish an empathetic understanding for the reader through description, [and convey] to the reader what [the] experience itself would convey” (Stake, 1995, p. 39). The processes I employed throughout the study encouraged investigation, reflection and learning and the teaching units detail the questioning techniques I used with the students, including their responses to the drama strategies they learnt and practised in each session. They also outline the scaffolding completed with the class prior to beginning each writing activity. My reflections from each session as well as implications and ideas for further lessons are also outlined in each account and give a clear idea of how drama tools can be accommodated and utilised in the classroom and related to writing activities. The accounts were adapted from my field notes and written into a descriptive, almost narrative form, intended to be relatable for teachers and easy to understand. To ensure the study had a trustworthy aspect and allow the reader to better visualise using these methods in their own classrooms, student responses have been included in the accounts which track their perceptions of the study.

I used systematic methods to analyse four writing samples collected from six students; two at each respective level of working towards, at and above the expected standards of writing to ensure a balanced study that would be useful for other educators. The six students were selected to give a balance of both boys and girls and because they all had differing views towards writing. Three of the students were focused on more closely in order to understand their journey throughout the topic and document changes in their motivation. The selected samples were narrative and were written at the beginning and end of each of the two data collections to compare progress over time and allowing an assessment similar to a pre-test and post-test model that would occur in a general classroom situation. The samples were analysed against a variety of writing features that were adapted from the school’s own writing progressions and integrated with the National Standard’s more general writing features to include characteristics such as word count, surface

feature use, paragraphs, sentence types and use of emotive language; these features cover areas of writing that would usually be assessed on and reported to parents. As mentioned earlier I chose to include the National Standards into my study as they are a current point of discussion amongst the teaching community and causing much debate. I felt it could be helpful for teachers to see how the standards were easily adapted to fit my study, showing them ways they could do the same.

As I describe more explicably in Chapter Six I constructed an individual table for each student to analyse both surface and deeper features of writing and track changes occurring in both areas. The tables were written as an indicator of the individual needs of each student and show areas they required further development in. I compared the total word count in each sample and counted and recorded the correct use of a range of surface features. I also counted and compared the correct use of spelling words, paragraphs and sentences, and recorded the amount of emotive language and subject-specific vocabulary used. To analyse the students' writing samples the variables were compared across the table and after marking each section using the measures above I was able to further compare final results for each student and note any improvements including areas requiring further teaching input. To ensure inter-rater reliability the classroom teacher analysed a selection of the writing samples following the processes I used and then I calculated the similarities and differences between our findings.

To further analyse the learning process I followed the individual journeys of three children in the class who were then learning at the respective levels of working towards, at and above the expected level for their year at school. These journeys document information gained from the data outlined above and quote student responses to the drama including their views on writing in general. Data from interviews and journal entries was incorporated to record these responses and identify changes in their attitudes towards writing as the research continued. These children were also included in the benchmarking analysis to enable their results to be viewed both systematically and descriptively.

## Chapter Four: The Process and What We Achieved – Part A

### Becoming the Pioneers

In search of a means to enable students to write more freely with motivation and engagement, I spent two weeks with the class using a process drama based around the *New Zealand Pioneers*. O'Neill explains that 'process drama is a method of teaching and learning that involves students in imaginary, unscripted, and spontaneous scenes...it exists through the interactions of students and teachers, and it is framed by curricular topics, teacher objectives, and students' personal experiences' (O'Neill, 1995). In Chapter Two I reviewed the research of Sarah Marino (2012) who found that drama clarified the confusion students sometimes felt in writing classes and gave them an authentic purpose for their writing. I also acknowledged 'Playing our stories', a handbook put out by the Ministry of education in 2006, that supports 'drama [contributing] to students' literacy development by deepening their ability to engage with, comprehend, and respond to written text' (Ministry of Education, 2006b, p. 17). On the basis of this it is clear that drama can have an impact on students' writing and my aim with this study was to try and add further recognition to this area.

In the introduction I referred to the class I worked with which included 9 – 11 year olds of varying writing ability. Classroom assessment, using the school's writing progressions, showed 54% of the class were achieving below the expected level when it came to writing. My initial discussion with the class showed that many students enjoyed writing but found inspiration to be an issue. A large group also told me they did not enjoy writing at all. Yet it has been repeatedly argued that writing instruction is most effective when students are engaged and motivated in the writing process (Clay, 1987 cited in Smith & Elley, 1997, p. 30). I worked on the basis that the incorporation of drama into a writing programme would increase students' enjoyment and motivation and therefore improve students' skills. During two weeks in term one I facilitated nine process drama and writing lessons with the class. We based it on the early New Zealand colonials in Christchurch and entitled the unit 'The New Zealand Pioneers' which was a topic they were focusing on over that term. I used the following data sources to track the progress of students during the teaching:

- Daily observation of students
- Daily field notes detailing lessons and any changes that had occurred

- Daily writing samples from the students
- A questionnaire on the students' views of writing taken in session two
- An interview with the classroom teacher prior to the research
- Interviews with selected students after the research
- Daily motivation charts, filled out by the students
- Daily journal entries written by the students

After examining the students' writing samples, I was able to identify their strengths and weaknesses. I could monitor motivation and engagement daily through my observation and the students' feedback. The interview with students provided me with their further interpretation of the process drama session and how they felt it impacted upon their writing and enthusiasm for learning overall.

Before teaching began, the students had the opportunity of questioning me about the teaching block, and there was excited anticipation at the thought of 'doing drama'. I believe most of them assumed we would be playing drama games for two weeks. The students all knew they were helping me with a university study and so when I informed them that they would become junior researchers, providing data that would become a part of my own overall research there was an air of self-importance. Literature suggests that informing students along the way in any topic leads to a transparency that aids in their working with you and not against you. This also gives them ownership for the topic and results in students showing a much stronger commitment to their learning (Smith & Elley, 1997).

## **Day One**

The first session began with the introduction of a main character into our process drama. The class had not participated in many drama sessions prior to 'The Pioneers' and so some explanation was needed. I reminded them that anything we did was enabled through the magic of drama. We could go back in time, we could meet anyone we chose to and we could become passengers on one of the first four ships that brought colonists and emigrants to New Zealand. To enable students to participate fully in a drama they need to believe in the characters and the story enough to be able to work with them and their experiences while at the same time realising it is not real life (Greenwood, 2005). The students were engaged throughout our discussion and I found that the answer 'through the magic of drama' answered all of their questions easily.



Some dramas start with a strong pre-text that hooks the students into the drama. 'In general terms, a pre-text is any text that contains the seeds of the text that will emerge through the drama' (Greenwood, 2005, p. 13). This is a moment that will grasp their curiosity encouraging them to 'want' to learn more about the proposed topic. My pre-text was in the form of artifacts. I had collected and made various items that looked to have come from the 1850's; which was when the Charlotte Jane, one of the first four ships carrying the pioneers, made her journey from Plymouth Sound, England to Lyttelton, New Zealand. These items included a lace handkerchief and 'diamond' brooch, a newspaper advertisement inviting emigrants to apply for passage, some diary entries, a Jamaican-looking doll and a range of different embroidered cloths. I informed the class that the items had all belonged to a passenger named Elsie. The students had an opportunity to look at each item in groups and discuss why Elsie might have thought these particular items to be so special. In the course of the activity there was increasingly rich discussion about who Elsie might have been and why she might have travelled to New Zealand. The doll caused a lot of confusion as the other artifacts had looked like they belonged to a wealthy, English girl. However, a dirty, coloured doll did not match. When we re-grouped I said we were so lucky because through the 'magic of drama' we could meet Elsie. The class were given time to write questions they could ask Elsie to discover more about her. I found that this caused much excitement about the possibility of an actual visitor from the Charlotte Jane! In fact only one student questioned her age and suspected we might be meeting a great grandchild.

The next stage of the drama required me to assume the character of Elsie. This is a dramatic strategy called *teacher-in-role* which is a 'powerful device for influencing the direction of the drama' (Greenwood, 2005, p. 11). This task enabled the students to question 'Elsie' and find out more about her. Because they were doing the questioning I was able to give them as much or as little information as I liked, therefore peaking their curiosity even further.

I had already told the students we would be meeting Elsie, so once regrouped I reminded them of the need to be respectful to visitors and that I would go and get her. I said "you will know who she is because she wears a colourful scarf". At this I stood up, wrapped a scarf around my neck and sat back down again. A number of students looked confused, and one or two looked disappointed that their 'visitor' was actually me! However a few realised quickly what we were doing and put their hands up with questions. As more questions were asked and answered the class became

more enthusiastic. When Elsie said she “really must go” they called goodbye and were disappointed they couldn’t ask more questions. I wondered afterwards if I should have continued until the students ran out of questions to ask. However, I was so aware of a lack of time I felt the need to move on. After coming out of role I asked the students to reiterate what they had learnt and the results were impressive. All were able to give me information on Elsie, the ship and where many of the artifacts had come from.

I asked the students to create a written character description of Elsie. For this they needed to write down all they had discovered about her through their questioning. My belief is that this is an important step in aiding their memories. The enthusiasm they gave this task was thrilling, and all students, even those that require writing support, were engaged in the task. I believe this shows the impact teacher-in-role can have to a lesson. It also shows the importance of a strong pretext. The students were motivated and engaged for the entire 90 minutes that I was with them, using inquiry, thinking, discussion and recording skills. As the session came to an end I introduced the task of writing in their personal journal.

## **Day Two**

We began with the questionnaire which had the aim of gathering the students’ opinions of writing, many of whom found it an unexciting subject that was required at school. Then, after reviewing and reflecting on the previous day’s session, we split into two groups: the working class emigrants and the upper class colonists. Within those groups they made their own families and assumed characters that had lived in England in 1850. This took some discussion and teacher input, as I found the first time the students were reluctant to work in mixed groups. Eventually after talking about realism and being in role, most were able to do this. I did find as the week continued this changed dramatically and students were working together unreservedly.

Once in groups, a new character, Edward Wakefield, was introduced. We talked about who he was and the company he started with the aim of encouraging the English to take up residence in New Zealand. Some prior information like this was vital as the students had shown me at the beginning of the topic that they had extremely limited knowledge of anything to do with the pioneers. Edward Wakefield, being an actual historical figure, gave students a chance to learn true history as they had fun. I informed the students they would be meeting Edward in the roles they had chosen. They would need to think about their questions carefully because this was their chance to decide if

they actually wanted to go to New Zealand. Again I employed a teacher-in-role strategy, this time wearing a hat to assume the character of Edward. At no point in my teacher-in-role did I change my voice, my actions or even the way I sat. I answered their questions as Edward would have, brushing off some with excuses and using strong exaggeration to promote New Zealand as an exciting opportunity. When I had finished it was interesting to hear the students' thoughts on Edward; that he was sneaky but very convincing, and all of them chose to make the voyage to New Zealand.

Throughout the research I kept a reflective journal. Here I had noted that I could have used a decision alley technique at this point in the drama as it would have given more depth to the decision the Pioneers had to make. A decision alley is a useful technique for exploring any kind of dilemma faced by a character. It provides an opportunity to analyse a decisive moment in greater detail (Drama Resource, 2012). I noted that my own learning of how to facilitate a process drama was developing at the same time as the students' knowledge of how to participate.

The writing task for this session was to create an advertisement using acquired information to encourage English residents to move to New Zealand. Students were completely silent and focused as they wrote. Julian, who had shown dislike of writing in his questionnaire and previous lessons, was totally engaged during the task and began his advertisement with

*'Want to live a better life? Then come to New Zealand on a free pass'.*

This showed impact and incorporated some of the information that Edward had relayed, that those who would emigrate to work would get subsidised, if not free, passes on the ship.

### **Day Three**

This session began with the introduction of a new character, Henry, of whom the class were given no prior knowledge. Henry was a different class to Elsie and Edward which allowed the students a different point of view. Their questions were creative and the class soon learned a large amount about Henry and his reasons for being on the ship. Upon questioning after coming out of role, the majority of the students could relay this information easily. It was interesting to hear that they thought Henry had an Irish accent and that he was a much friendlier person than the other two characters, particularly because I hadn't changed anything about my manner or voice when I spoke to them as Henry. The class completed a character description of Henry and then spent

some time in their family groups, out of role, discussing and confirming their names, ages, jobs and relationships. Here I began incorporating freeze frames into the drama, a technique that enables a moment from the drama to be frozen, thus allowing it to be examined more closely (O'Toole & Dunn, 2002). I used freeze framing throughout the remainder of my time with the class and the students really enjoyed this strategy and showed huge improvement as time passed.

The students then 'walked onto the ship' in role, some trying hard to use expressions that would identify their character clearly. They then froze and the 'audience' had the opportunity to tap a character on the shoulder and question them about who they were or why they had decided to make the journey. As this was the first time some students had been in role, some found this task difficult, their minds going blank at the thought of giving an answer. Others were engaged straight away and able to tell us that their job had ended as a result of the industrial revolution and that they hoped for better opportunities farming in New Zealand. Upon reflection it seemed most students were pleased with their character; however in their journals others felt they needed to put more thought in next time.

I then began to use cue cards I had created prior to the drama. I had chosen actual events from the Charlotte Jane because I felt it vital to keep the students learning as much as possible. Interest in the topic had not wavered at all and the feedback I was reading in the class's journals was positive and encouraging.

I gave two cue cards, one based in steerage and one in the cabin area. After discussion on the difference in lifestyle, the students created a freeze frame of what their particular family would have been doing at that time on the ship. The class was very enthusiastic and it was incredibly noisy with a lot of laughter was taking place. A number were in role as misbehaving students, some of the colonists were at a wedding where husbands were refusing to hold their wife's hand for the dance. We stopped the drama here as I feel it vital that if something needs explanation all must come out of role to aid understanding.

I questioned what people would have been like in 1850. One student was able to tell me that students would have been 'seen and not heard'. This began a short discussion on how their characters would have actually been acting. When they had a second opportunity to create their freeze frames it was much more realistic and the students had a better understanding of life on board the ship.

Their writing task for that day was a diary from the point of view of their own character, recapping their day on the ship. The whole class took less than a minute to begin writing and were all engaged in their task. When I stopped them after ten minutes, some moaned and asked for more time which was thrilling to hear. I informed them that we would be incorporating editing tomorrow so they would get some extra time then.

#### **Day Four**

After starting the following day with an editing lesson and giving the students time to review their diaries we then spent some time working through how to improve our freeze frames. The class split into two halves, one as the 'audience' and then swapped over. They were to portray a scene where they had been on the Charlotte Jane for three days now and some of them were very sea sick. As they froze the audience analysed the scene before them; who was or was not realistic and why. After both groups had presented their scene we discussed the importance of freeze framing and what helps us portray appropriate emotion. Students recognised that character identification leads to a better understanding of their character's experience and therefore a stronger belief in the drama.

I gave out another cue card which used the character of Elsie, and gave the students only a few minutes to form the scene portrayed. The students worked out of their family groups in this session, allowing them to work with a different set of people. The freeze frames were good, with convincing body language and facial expressions. I was pleased we had spent some time discussing the methods to get to this point as it showed a huge improvement on their original freeze frames.

The groups created two more freeze frames and I again used thought tapping to 'hear' what they were thinking in role. They were to say what was going through their mind at that moment. Some struggled with this to begin with, instead giving a description of what they were doing. However, as we spent more time on this technique the students showed strong improvement. After the second freeze frame, I asked them to imagine what might have happened exactly five minutes prior to the event they had just portrayed and to create this scene, we then repeated the activity showing what happened five minutes afterwards. This is an excellent way to tease out the story instead of just creating frozen moments. Because we had created many scenes with the character Elsie I asked the students to write a diary entry detailing some of her experiences. The writing was fluid and all students were engaged as they wrote independently. I noticed that towards the end

some were also editing using the strategies we had discussed earlier. Julian had written six lines (a big achievement for him) and was looking extremely pleased with himself. After 15 minutes of writing I announced that Cook had nearly finished preparing the evening meal and they were all invited to the dining room. There were many groans as the majority of students wanted to keep writing. Upon reflection, if this opportunity was repeated I would certainly aim to allow more time for writing so the children could edit and improve their work with more detail.

### **Day Five**

The next day was focused on more improvisation activities. The class were back in their family groups and were able to spend some time role playing in their respective areas on board the Charlotte Jane. I wanted to give the students a chance to do this as I felt there had been a lot of structured work and, as Greenwood asserts, playing is a 'very powerful accelerator of learning. Pleasure, or having fun, makes the task seem easier. It gives motivation. And it also seems related to a sense of ownership of the task' (Greenwood, 2005, p. 14). After some time I asked the groups to freeze and we took turns watching one group at a time. The students reflected on their improvisation, and some felt that their commitment to their characters had been a little weak and they needed to remember who they were. The act of observation and reflection is important and I frequently returned to this technique to allow the students to identify changes, instead of me telling them. In reflection students make discoveries about their learning and grow in understanding about the consequences and implications of their attitudes (Lambert & O'Neill, 1990, p. 15). This day's written assignment was an addition to Elsie's diary and the students informed me this was very easy to do since they had learnt so much information from the freeze frames.

### **Day Six**

I began the second week with a lesson on punctuation. I have found through my own teaching experience that even the most imaginative child writers can be lacking in this necessary skill. In this class there were only five students who were using punctuation at a satisfactory level, although they too could have extended themselves. The remainder of the class often forgot to use full stops and capital letters which, in New Zealand, we would expect proficiency of this by the second or third year of school. In fact the Ministry of Education's Literacy Learning Progressions state that by the end of year three, students should be "proofreading their writing to check the

spelling, grammar, and punctuation, drawing on their own developing knowledge about words and sentence construction and using classroom resources such as junior dictionaries” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 14). My original aim with this study was to include more work on punctuation and I was worried I hadn’t attacked it sooner, with only two weeks left I was feeling the pressure of time. However this did give me a focus to take into the second data collection I completed with the class later in the year.

I began with quotation marks, as I wanted the students to incorporate these into a later session. They all knew how to use full stops and capital letters so I felt a lesson on this would be rather monotonous for them and result in loss of interest. Also throughout the two weeks I was modelling correct use and checking this in their books. With any type of lesson “it is of prime importance that the teacher should write with the students. Teacher writing has multiple effects on students, primarily, they begin to see writing as an activity which everyone does” (Smith & Elley, 1997, p. 44). I noticed during this lesson that students were quite fidgety and so I have resolved to make punctuation a more interesting teaching area in the next study.

We spent more time on freeze frames, portraying life onboard to get the students back into their characters and focused on the drama. It was at this point I introduced a final character to the class. I wanted them to get more of an idea of Elsie through her relationship with this character, and show that it wasn’t just British people (although they were the majority) onboard. Wearing a coat this time I became Mr Abernathy, an American who owned a tea plantation in Jamaica. He had paid passage on the Charlotte Jane to look for gold in New Zealand. After this teacher-in-role I handed out a cue card for the students to create a series of freeze frames:

- Mr Abernathy has invited Elsie to tea with his daughter Florence.
- Elsie has just arrived and the girls are greeting each other.

The purpose of these freeze frames was to view events on the ship across all areas. The students had completed a lot of work in steerage and this gave them an opportunity to understand life as it was for the upper class. The students were incorporating not only mannerisms into their roles, but also voice which was interesting to see, as I had never done that as teacher-in-role, showing that “drama skills such as the successful adoption of a role will grow from being *in* the situation” (Lambert & O'Neill, 1990, p. 15). Many groups did this well, though I did notice one that had Mr Abernathy calling Elsie on a cell phone and serving fries – prompting a discussion on what had

been invented in 1850. This of course is a natural learning opportunity in the classroom so as a group we dissected what had existed in that time, therefore ensuring learning for the entire class. Unfortunately, because of this I completely ran out of time for a writing task. However, Chapter Five shows how we did tackle learning about quotation marks though working in role.

### **Day Seven**

On the second day of week two we started with a hot-seating exercise. This is an exercise where players have a need to question or interrogate a character to find out more about them or why they might have behaved a certain way in their role (O'Toole & Dunn, 2002). During a group discussion we spoke about what hot-seating is and how they could make it more realistic. Most were able to tell me that if they knew their character well enough they would be able to answer questions. We debated the use of accents. I asked them if I had used an accent with Elsie, Henry or Mr Abernathy with some students thinking 'yes', Henry had sounded Irish and Mr Abernathy was definitely American. However, after discussion they realised the use of accent was unnecessary, and that I had not changed my voice but instead, their imaginations had added an accent to the characters for them. It was here the students began to realise how caught up in the drama they had become.

After giving the students time in their family groups to review their assumed roles I called them back to a circle and set up a hot-seat. A hot-seating activity means that only the person in the hot-seat is in character, the rest of the audience is not in role, they are simply asking questions. I was interested to see how many students were brave enough to take the hot-seat, but was completely surprised that they were all incredibly enthusiastic and showed a strong knowledge of their characters. As the hot-seating progressed, questioning became stronger too. The class had enjoyed questioning me in role, but the opportunity to inquire about their peers was a much more enthralling topic for them.

It was now that I introduced the Charlotte Jane newspaper, 'The Cockroach'. The newspaper assumedly was a way for the passengers onboard the ship to keep themselves amused during the passage to New Zealand. After discussion surrounding the purpose of 'The Cockroach' and why it was named as such the class began to brainstorm ideas for interesting articles. They decided some would be informative and some light-hearted because although a newspaper is a way of spreading



current events, on the ship it was also the entertainment. The students brainstormed three events they thought would make interesting reading:

- Mr Abernathy's tea party
- The wedding
- The bad storm

Following this discussion there was a lesson on writing a transactional text in the form of an article. The beauty of running a drama with writing gave the students an extensive knowledge of events that had happened on board, and the type of people travelling to New Zealand. It also meant that stopping at any point to give a lesson, like the above, is easy and runs naturally with the programme.

We discussed the use of powerful headlines to grab attention, using Edward de Bono's (de Bono Thinking Systems, 2012) white hat for noting only factual information, and the importance of the first paragraph containing as many of those facts as possible. We completed an example as a class and the students did some short activities to aid their understanding. I kept this lesson fairly succinct, time being a large factor, but also because the students were itching to write and I didn't want them to lose their eagerness. Given the option of writing with a partner or by themselves, most students opted to work independently; I thought this to be a huge breakthrough in their attitudes and later discussion with the class teacher confirmed this. After time I stopped them and asked those that were keen to share their idea in a sentence. These were powerful and gave those that were still thinking some suggestions.

I briefly talked of the importance of paragraphs and many were able to tell me that a new idea begins a new paragraph. I was pleased to note that most students worked their article into paragraphs at this point. During my teaching I had only facilitated the ideas, never saying something 'had' to be done, instead giving hints about what could make it better. I found this to be an interesting tool with the students who enjoyed giving feedback and took on helpful hints enthusiastically. A part of this is teaching the students to use self-regulation strategies, enabling them to decide when an instruction is important. 'Students' beliefs that they can complete tasks on their own makes them feel they have more freedom of choice as writers' (Parr & Glasswell, 2010, p. 39). At this time in their personal journals students were writing that they felt their writing was improving because of the drama and they loved the fact that the ideas were flowing.

My aim was to make writing an enjoyable activity and change the students' attitudes and so far this seemed to be working.

### **Day Eight**

I began the next session with hot-seating again as it had been so popular. The students were just as motivated to take the seat and were strong in their roles. There was a relieving teacher in the classroom that day and he mentioned later how surprised he was that the students knew so much about the topic and that they were able to confidently take the seat and answer questions. He even questioned me as to whether I had provided them with all the answers, which of course I had not. This was the eighth session I had spent with the class and in that time they had covered a vast range of material, yet I had spent only short periods of time 'teaching' them. Drama was a fantastic way for the students to inquire, discuss, and improvise a story based on actual events that I had fed to them through different characters and short discussion. The added benefit was that eight days into the unit the students were still thoroughly engaged and keen to learn more.

The class spent the remainder of the session on their articles, drafting, reworking and editing them. They then formed small groups and developed their own newspaper. For this task we had already discussed the roles involved in producing a newspaper, such as journalists, the editor, photographers. As the students had all written articles they were all in the position of journalists but also took on smaller roles to create their paper.

### **Day Nine**

For the final session I wanted to end on a fun note. We began by forming three 'photographs'. This was an informal way of reviewing what the students had learnt about the Charlotte Jane and her passengers. The students formed a group and created freeze frames as if posing for a photograph at the following three times:

- Just before boarding the 'Charlotte Jane'
- Over a month into passage
- Upon arrival at Lyttelton

The students improved as we progressed through each frame. Thought tapping was used as they posed for the photos and students spoke of fear, homesickness, boredom, and enjoyment. They were extremely realistic and showed strong knowledge of what they had learnt. We broke just before the third photo because as yet we had completed no work on the emigrant's arrival in New

Zealand. A discussion developed of the colonists' feelings, not only seeing new land for the first time in ninety days, but also their fear of the unknown, accommodation, food, and the native people of which they knew little. Then we formed the last photograph, after which the students moved into their family groups to enact the arrival. There was much excitement at the prospect of new land and a small amount of fear at meeting the native Maori people. They then formed a scene to show what they would have been doing two hours after getting off the ship which became a series of frames showing time progress. At every opportunity I would stop them for discussion and refocus on historical events so the students stayed on task. The final task was to complete a diary entry for the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1850, detailing their character's thoughts and the events that had occurred upon arrival.

This ended the data collection. I returned a week later and asked the students to complete one more written task; they were to write a narrative from Elsie's point of view imagining that Elsie's great, great grandchildren had found all her diary entries detailing her time on the Charlotte Jane.

### **Final thoughts**

Overall the work produced in the project was very positive and gave me excellent insight into the abilities of the students. I found that process drama led the students into a different, imagined world, yet one where they were able to learn about their country's history at the same time. It provided a context in which the students could write freely in role and allowed me at the same time to teach the functions and forms of various writing genres. The sources of data I collected throughout the drama gave a number of outcomes:

- Observation of students and students' personal journal entries showed a large increase in motivation and engagement throughout each lesson.
- Writing samples from the students gave an increase in the amount of words written in a comparison from the beginning and end of the research. They also showed a moderate increase in the use of surface and deeper features.

At the end of the research I also received feedback from both the teacher and parents indicating that the students' motivation for learning had improved.

## **Chapter Five: The Process and What We Achieved – Part B**

### **Debating the Quake**

As my research continued, the need for another data collection arose and I found myself with the opportunity of returning to the classroom. Often in qualitative research phenomena evolves along the way and needs more time to be understood (Stake, 1995). This second project allowed me the chance to further explore ways to use drama to prompt writing. The second study was in term three of the same school year. I wanted a stronger focus on writing as I found that whilst my last data collection was strong in showing motivation and engagement, there was not as much emphasis on writing as is needed in a primary classroom. “Students have much to learn about the writing process before it can become an efficient system of communication” (Mackenzie, 2010, p. 23). I centred the topic on the Canterbury earthquake as it continued the theme of Canterbury from the first study and was something the students had a personal experience of. I hoped their experience would lead to detailed writing and recollection of the events. I used the same data sources as in the first study and spent the same amount of time.

I was apprehensive about this topic as for many students it holds unhappy memories. However, it was applicable to the class because I wanted to incorporate personal knowledge into their writing therefore tapping into their own experiences and finding a significance to what they write (Loane & Muir, 2010); thus I felt it pertinent to choose a ‘relevant’ rather than a ‘safe’ topic. I discussed with the class teacher and found that none of the students in the class had long-term negative effects from the earthquake; nonetheless, I incorporated a technique called ‘The Magic Curtain’. This involved visualising a curtain drawn across the classroom, the students were to open it before we could start each lesson, then at the end we would close it and any unhappy memories stayed in class.

Working with the same students enabled me to continue developing their drama skills, enabling them to know me better, and keep the momentum and motivation going from the last teaching block. Since this research is conceptualised in terms of a case study, these aspects of continuance were important and facilitated a deepening understanding of the case. (Stake, 1995, p. 4).

## Day one

The first session began with a discussion on the students' views of writing. I wrote four conversation 'points' on the board:

- *What I like about writing*
- *What I don't like about writing*
- *My favourite part of writing*
- *What would make writing better/easier for me*

Then discussion cards were laid out on the mat to give students ideas of how to continue a conversation:

- *I agree with that point because...*
- *I disagree because...*
- *Can you justify that point...*
- *I would like to challenge that idea...*
- *I would like to piggyback that idea...*

Many had used these cards before and so could run the discussion free from my input. It was interesting to hear that some students focused on their enjoyment of drama and how they felt the last session really helped them to think of new ideas leading to improved writing.

After this I introduced the new process drama to be based around the Canterbury Earthquake of February 2011 and the 'magic curtain' strategy that we would be using. The class were extremely enthusiastic about the dramatic input and anxious to begin. They stood on two sides of the room and acted out opening the curtain. As they sat down Frank jumped up saying "we haven't tied it back yet though!" and he and Julian took a side each and pretended to tie back the sides so they wouldn't fall open. I believe this engagement in the drama came a lot quicker because of their first experience with me.

Next I wanted to inspire some quick writing ideas and through my initial interviews I knew the students reacted well to visual inspiration. I displayed a picture taken soon after the earthquake on the board, depicting a man standing outside his demolished shop, and asked the students in pairs, to discuss all that they remembered from the earthquake, either from their memory or from ideas that arose when viewing the picture. I then asked the partners to find another pair and share

with them – thus widening the ideas they could come up with. It was at this point that the students learnt to plan with a quick-write. They were to record what they had discussed and anything else they wanted in two minutes. Using their own raw knowledge, students are able to come up with draft ideas quickly and feel success at the amount they can write in a short time (Loane & Muir, 2010). I noticed that Bobby was not engaged, and when questioned told me he had no ideas, to which I replied “you are more than welcome to use others’ ideas from the conversation you just had”. On reflection perhaps a teacher-in-role could have been used here to provoke thinking and motivation; “a teacher has an obligation to develop the skill capacities, reasoning ability, and understanding of the students” (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. 60). The students shared their plans with the person next to them and then had further time to record any new ideas that arose. Upon questioning students at the end of the data collection, feedback on the quick-write was positive and the overall view was that of better motivation to write.

A dramatic skill I used frequently in my first study was freeze framing and I decided to use this as a pretext in the second workshop to motivate ideas and curiosity into the topic; it also acted as extra planning for written recounts. We debated what time of day the earthquake had happened and where they were at that time and then I asked the students, in group numbers of their choosing, to create three freeze frames about the February earthquake, showing:

- *1 hour before*
- *5 minutes after*
- *5 hours after*

They had thirty seconds to form their groups and only one minute to make their first frame. This seems a short time, but I wanted the class to quickly improvise their scenarios, given that they already had the key information. There was wide enthusiasm here and the students quickly formed groups and began discussing their task.

I stopped the class and we took turns viewing each group’s freeze frame. While frozen, volunteers tapped them and asked them what they were doing, where they were, and how they were feeling. Reflection was a key part of this technique, so the class were thinking about what worked or why it didn’t. As noted in ‘Playing our stories’, “reflection is often a spur for further action as new questions come up for exploration” (Ministry of Education, 2006b, p. 10).

The students had two minutes to create the second two freeze frames, and when time was up I counted down from five and all groups froze at the same time. I walked around myself this time tapping shoulders and asking questions. The students then unfroze and I counted them down again to repeat with the third and final frame. Because of time we could not view all groups, my aim was to continue the following day and use their freeze frames as a reminder for their recounts.

Finally the class had an extra 90 seconds to add to their original quick-write. When time was up I asked them to share with a partner and gave them five minutes to write their journal entries.

## **Day two**

Today began with Bobby, a child usually uninterested in writing, reminding me that the class needed to open the magic curtain. This was promising as he often used avoidance techniques in class and I enjoyed seeing how enthusiastically the other students did this again.

I wrote up the session's timeline, aware that five students were absent and another nine were leaving after an hour to attend a meeting. Anxious not to waste too much time, I wanted to create a sense of motivation for what lay ahead. O'Toole and Dunn (2002) suggest that it is always best to share your planning, your purpose and your intended outcomes...to keep the truth is merely mystifying and disempowering". After instruction the students moved into their freeze frame groups from the previous day, I then introduced the idea of a 'vignette'; a strategy to show movement from one scene to the next (Arts online, 2012). This was a new skill that I intended to use throughout the rest of the teaching unit. After a brief demonstration, I told the students they had five minutes to add a vignette between their freeze frames from yesterday and if time they could include simple dialogue. There was wide excitement at this and the noise level rose dramatically, yet, as I roamed the class all students were focused on the task. On reflection I did not give enough time for this activity and modelling would have been valuable at this point, nonetheless the students were engaged in the task.

The students took turns showing their frames, while volunteers tried to guess the idea behind each group's presentation. We reflected on the freeze frames and many felt the vignettes were strong and showed an easy movement from one frame to the next. Emma pointed out that a lot of groups forgot to freeze between each vignette and that this ruined the point of the freeze frame while Thomas felt that with more practise they could have been better.

The students returned to their desks and reviewed their quick-write from yesterday. I reminded them this was a planning tool only and today they would be using that plan to write a 'narrative' recount. The students had only 20 minutes to write as I wanted to keep them focused and we had spent a lot of time scaffolding. I voiced my expectation of capital letters and full stops, as an initiative for them to focus on correct use of surface features. This was an informal reminder given more as a hint than an instruction. Past experience has shown this is a more valuable input.

It was completely silent for the duration of the writing. Dennis, Greg and Bob had the assistance of a teacher aid for the first few minutes to get them on task. When roaming I noticed these boys were all writing and using their quick-write plans, which was encouraging given that they had a lot of difficulty in this area. Julian, who was very vocal in the first data collection about his lack of enthusiasm for writing wrote more than ever before and showed much more pride in his presentation.

When the twenty minutes were up I asked the students to come to the mat, adding that we would edit tomorrow. I enquired briefly if they felt the quick-write had benefited their writing. Their replies included the following comments:

*Thomas: I thought it was really good, I enjoyed writing it down first and then going back to it.*

*Lily: I agree with Thomas and usually I think planning is boring.*

*Joe: I liked it because it's a quick and easy way to plan.*

*Julian: It was easy because it was a vivid, traumatising experience which made it easy to write about.*

At this point the nine students had to leave for their meeting so I was left with a much smaller group. Pulling out the same picture we had used yesterday for our first discussion, we looked at the man standing in front of the damaged shop and I asked the students to imagine how he would be feeling looking at it. I then asked what happened to those businesses. Where might the owners go? What might they do? Student speculations included the following:

*Joe: They got insurance payouts from the EQC but would have lost money waiting to start again.*



*Lola: Maybe they could start up a stall in a market to sell their things.*

*Dianne: A hot chocolate place has started a stall in the mall.*

*Lily: My aunty is sharing her friend's garage and selling jewellery out of it.*

I announced for the next stage of the drama they would become business owners in Christchurch. They were to decide on a business and what they might do now that the earthquake had hit. After organisation and planning we shared their ideas and I informed the students that the next step was to create a series of freeze frames using vignettes. The dialogue within them would be used to create comic strips as a fun way of learning how to write quotes, we would then use the quotes to write a newspaper article. The freeze frames were to show scenes after the quake had hit. For example:

- *Standing outside shop, "what will we do now?" freeze then vignette to next scene.*
- *Business meeting, "we could try starting a juice stall in Hagley Park", freeze then vignette etc*

This ended the session. I arranged with the teacher that after lunch those students that had stayed with me could show the ones that left what we did, to save confusion next time. I also asked that the students would be allowed to write their daily journal entry and close the magic curtain; this meant that those who left would still have closure on the session and there would be continuity of procedure.

Finding at this stage that the planned sessions were taking longer than I originally thought, I opted to reduce some of the writing in order to conclude within the time frame which had no apparent impact on the quality of writing produced. As argued by O'Toole and Dunn it is crucial that time is spent on developing a good drama rather than rushing and failing to build belief in the situation (2002).

### **Day three**

Changes in the classroom timetable meant that my third session needed to be completed in the afternoon so I was only able to be with the students for 80 minutes rather than the usual 90.

When I arrived, the class opened the curtain and Frank informed me that he had tied back the curtain and that it was quite heavy, showing a strong belief in his role. I set the timer for 15 minutes and asked the class to edit their recounts. All students jumped up to do this and while not

silent, they were all focused on the task. There had been no drama build up today and yet there was a wide enjoyment in their writing. Julian spent five minutes reading through his writing then approached Thomas to edit for him. Unfortunately I missed most of this and only 'caught' him when Thomas had nearly finished. Julian and I had a 'chat' about editing and establishing the importance of self-editing as it is an important skill to have. There was strong motivation for this task which I had not expected and it was good to see a large number of students using dictionaries.

When time was up, students returned to the mat and we discussed the task for the day. Because we had introduced it the day before and those students who had been with me had informed those absent, I jumped straight into writing a basic model on the board. Establishing there would be three or four freeze frames, each with a vignette and simple dialogue. I gave an example of this and then drew it into a simple comic strip on the board:

- *Freeze frame: Three people standing outside their broken building sadly.*
- *Dialogue: This is so sad; we don't know what to do.*
- *Vignette to move to next scene*
- *Freeze Frame: Same three people planning their next move in a meeting.*
- *Dialogue: We think a good idea would be to work out of our garage.*
- *Vignette to move to next scene*

	
<p><b>Quote:</b> "this is so sad; we don't know what to do."</p>	<p><b>Quote:</b> "We think a good idea would be to work out of our garage."</p>

I then wrote under the comic strip a sentence from a newspaper article that used the quote from the comic strip.

*When interviewed about her thoughts on the earthquake, Miss Smith said “this is so sad; we don’t know what to do.”*

I asked the class if they were clear on what to do. All showed me the thumbs up sign and began to plan their freeze frames. They had twenty minutes to plan, practise and then present to the class. I roamed the classroom but stayed an observer. All groups were engaged in the task and I saw no one misbehaving, the outcome of the drama allowing the students to feel empowerment from discovering their own competence (Ministry of Education, 2006b). The groups then shared their freeze frame series with vignettes and dialogue. All were very good and they had put a lot of work into their facial expressions and dialogue. I did give some feedback as to the dialogue and on whether it would work as a quote in the newspaper. For example:

*Phil and Hermione’s scene:*

*Hermione: This business is going really well.*

*Phil: Mmmm and this hot chocolate is really good!*

I asked them if this could be quoted in a newspaper article; they shook their heads smiling. This meant that instead of telling the class what I thought, they could see from the model and create their own opinion. I also praised Bella, Chloe and Lily’s vignettes which showed a swirling motion into their next frozen scene. This was a good example showing others how to tighten their strategy without being instructed.

In the short time left students began to fill in the blank comic strips I had made. To conclude, the students wrote their journal entries and then all jumped up to close the curtain. I heard Bobby say “we’ll need a chainsaw to undo these ties”.

#### **Day four**

Today’s focus was planning and writing their newspaper articles. After opening the curtain enthusiastically (Frank decided it needed a chainsaw today) the class spent 15 minutes finishing their comic strips from the previous session.

We then began a lesson on quotations and how to include them in an article. I asked for ideas of quotes the students had used in their freeze frames and subsequently in their comic strips:

- *“Man, these earthquakes have done a lot of damage.”*

- *“Our business is ruined!”*
- *“Did we really lose that much money?”*
- *“It feels like my money is going out the window.”*

I wrote them up first with no punctuation and all on the same line to model writing a sentence appropriately. After asking students what I had done incorrectly they were able to say quotation marks were needed as well as full stops, and that a new speaker should start on a new line. The class had done this with me before in the first unit of work, but the teaching of literacy suggests it is helpful to review certain strategies more than once (for example Smith and Elley, 1997; Ferreiro and Pontecorvo, 1999).

Following this we looked at how to include a quote in a paragraph. Steve informed me that in an article there should be perhaps one paragraph with the quotes in it and the other paragraphs should be descriptive. I praised him for this idea and added that we definitely would not include quotes in our introductory or conclusive paragraphs. After paired discussion and class ideas we wrote together:

*After being asked how he felt his business had suffered in the earthquake, Bobby Fredrickson said, “It feels like my money is going out the window”.*

I left this sentence on the board as an example of how the students could include quotes into their work, we then skeleton-planned a newspaper article together. I gave them the heading *‘Christchurch businesses struggle to find space’* and asked what points were important to read in the first paragraph of a newspaper article; many hands shot up to tell me: *Who, what, where, and when.*

In pairs the students discussed ideas for first paragraph, then after listening to some we voted that Lola’s first sentence could go up as an example:

*After the recent earthquake in Christchurch on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, many businesses have suffered damage.*

Emma asked how long the article needed to be and Thomas guessed “probably about three to four paragraphs”. I asked if the rest of the class agreed with that, which they did and I sent them off to write. There was enthusiasm during the writing. However, I noticed Rebecca and Julian were slow to start. Rebecca asked me to help and said she had no ideas to which I informed her to think

about how she felt during the freeze frames yesterday. As on day one with Bobby I feel I could have provoked her ideas more with better dramatic scaffolding and I have determined to become better at doing so. Julian began to work closely with Tim next to him and soon started getting ideas down. Through experience I've found paired work encourages students who are at a lower ability to feel more success. In a study on students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, Everatt and Reid found that the process of working with others can be motivating and beneficial (Everatt & Reid, 2010). Throughout their writing I would stop the class and we would share others' paragraphs and give more ideas teaching while students wrote. For example at one point I stopped and using the students' suggestions I modelled the content of each paragraph including where to put their quotes:

*Paragraph one: intro with who, what, where, when*

*Paragraph two: expand on para one with more description of what happened*

*Paragraph three: include quotes from people personally involved*

*Paragraph four: conclusion*

Near the end of the session I called the class back to the mat area and shared the work in progress of Tim, Joe and Bobby, as they had very different but strong ideas.

## **Day five**

The previous session had ended with the articles being only partly written so I gave the class time to finish these off. I was pleased to see Julian writing in paragraphs and it was well written for his level. He approached me at one point asking for assistance in his conclusion. Joe also asked how to write a conclusion, so I stopped the class and used this as a teaching lesson. I also reminded them at this point that paragraphs were vital when writing newspaper articles. As Smith and Elley argue, teaching students at their point of need is far more beneficial than time spent running a specific programme in that area (Smith & Elley, 1997).

When time was up the class came to the mat area and split into groups of four. They were to take turns sharing their articles with their group and then choose a strong one to share with the class. There was lots of encouragement happening in groups as I walked around and when those voted by their peers shared their writing I was pleased to hear strong, well written articles. The class teacher also commented on the level of the students' writing, which was positive feedback. I

noticed that the enthusiasm to write has grown, even with my hint that there would be more writing at this stage than drama. No one had asked me when we will be 'doing drama' and their engagement levels in the sessions had been strong.

The class then spent a further seven minutes editing. I had set the timer for this and asked them to return to the mat when the buzzer went off. While they proofread their work I wrote on the board:

*Urgent Meeting*

*'Paparoa Street School is to be closed'*

*If you are interested in coming to the meeting be in Room 1 at 10.10am on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> July*

*(The time and data coincided when the buzzer was to go off).*

There was a lot of curiosity when the students came down to the carpet. I began by announcing for this next part they would be in role and asked them to think about who they might be. Ideas were:

- *The Principal*
- *Parents*
- *Teachers*
- *Students*
- *PTA members*
- *ERO members*
- *School neighbours*

I was impressed with the range of answers given. I informed them that I would be leaving the room and when I returned in role I would let them know who I was and why we were all there. I wanted to facilitate further learning and curiosity by being in role myself. This has the benefit of provoking a reaction as well as influencing the direction of the drama (Greenwood, 2005).

I bustled back into the classroom saying:

*Fantastic! You are all here and seated already. Thank you so much for coming to the meeting. My name is Mrs Carson and I work for the City Council. As you can see the closure of Paparoa Street School is currently underway at the moment, and we wanted to give you, the*

*community, a chance to ask any questions. Perhaps when you ask a question you could introduce yourselves so I can monitor who is here.*

Although the students asked intelligent questions there was an immediate reaction of confusion which quickly turned to anger as Mrs Carson brushed off their questions with evasive answers. The students did learn that, because of the earthquake, many businesses in Christchurch were in desperate need for space and therefore it had been decided that the school was to be used for those businesses. Some of the questions that arose were:

*Julian: hello, I'm a student at the school and I want to know, why this school?*

*Bobby: I'm a parent and why are you closing a primary school, why not set up buildings in the park?*

*Thomas: I'm a parent and I want to know, if you need space why didn't you choose Burnside High School?*

*Frank: Well I'm a teacher and why just this school? There are plenty of others!*

*Lola: Hello my name is .... I'm a parent of two girls and I would like to know when is the school closing and will we be compensated for the lack of warning you are giving us?*

When Mrs Carson had to “run off” because she was “terribly busy” the students were in an uproar. They showed an extremely strong reaction to attitude as my teacher-in-role and started shouting “Protest, protest” as Mrs Carson walked out of the room. When I re-entered as myself I quickly reminded the class that we were only creating a fictional drama and that this was not to be a personal jibe at the City Council!

I asked the class how they were feeling. Skye said she felt angry because they were expected to leave the school and just go somewhere else. Frank was disappointed that teachers would be out of a job. I informed them that next week we would be protesting in a way but it would be an intelligent, legal protest in written form. There was a large moan at that thought and Frank said “oh man, I already had my pitchfork ordered online!”

Unfortunately time was up. The class were very disappointed with this, wanting to build on their emotions and keep going. I divulged that we would meet Mrs Carson again on Monday and they could present her with some more questions!

## Day six

The class were seated on the mat and Frank proclaimed he was excited at the thought of continuing the meeting with Mrs Carson today. I said they would get a second chance at the same meeting but this time they would be given roles and have time to think of some questions. As a class we decided who would be attending the meeting and the students came up with this list:

- *Parents/family members*
- *Teachers/principal/PTA*
- *Business Owners form the CDB*
- *Students from the school*
- *Community members (e.g. school neighbours)*

The class numbered off 1 – 5 and each group was assigned a role. In that role they had ten minutes to think of questions they wanted to ask Mrs Carson. All groups eagerly began writing down possible questions except the Business Owners. They were confused and talking about how they did not want their school taken over by businesses showing they needed more belief in the roles they were in. The teacher aid intervened saying they were thinking about it too emotionally and to think instead about the money they would need and the families they probably had to support. I had placed the students in a variety of roles for this task as it is beneficial to have a balance of roles. However, there was tension here as to whether I should let the students choose the roles they portrayed, enabling more emotion and possible belief in their character or assign them roles thus enabling a spread of characters to add to the drama.

After ten minutes we reviewed some of their questions. I reminded them that this was a drama and the teacher aid was right, they needed to keep emotion out of it and adopt instead a different role. After a further three minutes revising their questions I left the classroom returning again as Mrs Carson.

*Welcome everyone, please find your seats, the meeting is about to begin and I don't have a lot of time. Now as you all know the City Council has proposed that this school is to be closed down to make space for the businesses in the CDB that have been damaged beyond repair in the earthquake. I am pleased to see some of those business owners here today. Welcome to you. We have many plans in progress for this space and see it as being a real community asset. Of course there are a lot of businesses interested in setting up in these grounds and*



*only so much space so nothing is set in stone yet. If you have any questions I will endeavour to answer them to the best of my ability. Please make yourself known to me when you ask so that I know who I am answering. Thank you.*

Hands rose quickly:

*Lola, a neighbour of the school, was pleased the school was closing as so many balls went over her fence, but interested to know which businesses would be starting up.*

*Thomas, a student, was disappointed the school was closing and wanted to know where else they were expected to go.*

*Skye, a local dairy owner, was angry as she thought the new businesses would take students away from buying lollies at her store.*

*Lily was a business owner but could not quite get past the personal emotion of the situation saying she was a business owner and a parent and where would her students go?*

When I came out of role the class were very subdued. I requested their thoughts and only two students put their hands up. The teacher aid mentioned later that Mrs Carson was a bit mean, resulting in scaring the students into submission. However, the class teacher, who had been watching disagreed and said it was more realistic that way. Drama is a way of extending language and ideas, allowing students to find new ways of understanding their world (Greenwood, 2005).

I informed the students that we would now be creating some freeze frame series with vignettes again, as we did last week. This time they were to stay in their current roles and add dialogue which could be used in a second article based on the school closure.

There was much excitement at recreating freeze frames. However, Joe and Abby (in the business owners group) needed extra information to develop their idea. After fifteen minutes I gathered the class together and each group shared the outline for what each of their frames would be about. This allowed me to check their understanding and progress and gave a chance for other groups to gain ideas as well as remind them to make sure their dialogue was simple enough to be used as a quote and to make sure their character's thoughts on the situation came across. I gave them another seven minutes to finalise these and then the groups presented.

The first group had too much dialogue and it was unclear what they were thinking. We reflected on this as a class and pulled out the clearest quotes to use. This reflection helped the groups to improve and after each delivery the class told me the quotes that had been used.

We reviewed how to set out a newspaper article then the students moved to their desks to write and were quiet within minutes. After five minutes of writing time I asked those who were keen to share their introduction. Of the five that shared, all were excellent.

I had felt at many times in this session that the students were quiet and unresponsive to the lesson. They were usually talkative and more enthusiastic. However, after reading their journal entries, I found that all had enjoyed the session and really liked the meeting with Mrs Carson. This was interesting as it wasn't the reaction I had thought I had received. It is often important to review a drama session to gauge what learning has occurred as sometimes it is not apparent (Ministry of Education, 2006b). With only three sessions left I was worried I would not fit everything in and again I felt rushed.

### **Day seven**

This day began with the students finishing their newspaper articles. They had twenty minutes to write and all were focused. The teacher aid was working with Greg, Bob and Dennis, although I did ask her to let the boys come up with as many of their own ideas as possible, ensuring motivation through pooling all the boys' ideas (Everatt & Reid, 2010). When time was up I asked them to split into the same groups as on day five and share their writing. When they finished they returned to their desks and had a further ten minutes if they wanted to add any ideas they had piggy-backed from others. All groups were enjoying each other's writing and as I roamed around I saw many, like Rebecca, who had found the article writing more difficult were relieved they had done theirs correctly and could also add to them.

After some students volunteered to share their articles I informed them that they were to get back into their same groups from yesterday's meeting with Mrs Carson and could choose a different role if they wished and create a brainstorm. Reflecting on this I think the roles should have remained the same to allow continuity within the drama, although many opted not to change. They needed to think of a variety of ideas that could be used to persuade the council to stop the closure of their school. Students were very excited during this task and as I roamed I could hear some 'interesting' ideas. Some were discussing protests, petitions and flying banners.

After only ten minutes I called them back as a group and directed their attention to the board, on which I had written:

*Community Meeting to address possible closure of school*

*If interested be in Room X at 12.15 on July 24<sup>th</sup>.*

This gave them twenty more minutes to decide on their most persuasive idea, extend it and create a short plan to take to the meeting; there they would try and convince others in the community that theirs was the best idea to persuade the council.

There was much debate in groups choosing the best idea. I needed to interrupt Frank as he was on a very excited bandwagon about blowing up the City council and becoming off task with this. I reminded them that it needed to be legal and it needed to be something the council would take seriously. I hoped to restrict their ideas through saying this, without giving an ultimatum that would lower their enthusiasm.

Lola's group thought that sending pictures of students enjoying school, accompanied by a strong letter would be persuasive.

Steve's group thought a daily letter complaining of the proposed changes and the community flying banners outside their houses would grab the council's attention.

Joe's group (who had decided to stay as business owners and agreed with the proposal) were very focused on writing a letter and listed points below it such as:

- *Thanking them for the idea*
- *An explanation of how it would help*
- *Asking for a private meeting*

Frank's group finally decided on collecting a petition from the community.

Dianne's group also thought a persuasive letter would be a good idea.

At 12.15 the class gathered and began their meeting. I had informed them we would treat it like a discussion circle; however they would need to stand up to say their piece, whether it be responding to the last idea or proposing a new one. This worked very well. The students all listened to each other and were quite animated debating the best idea to convince the council. When time came to a close there were two main ideas that went to a vote:

- *Write a letter*
- *Hold a face-to-face meeting*

The class decided on a meeting. I found this unusual as so many had decided on letters in their plans! Because I had quietly hoped for a letter to incorporate more writing I decided to suggest that they prepare for the meeting by writing a speech (in the form of a persuasive letter).

### **Day nine**

Our final session was a community debate responding to the proposed closure of the school and then writing a narrative as a kind of post-test to finish the data collection.

I informed the class that I would be collecting their books today and checking their work and in particular I would be looking at editing skills and use of punctuation. We had a discussion about the punctuation that could be used in an argument, other than the obvious full stops, capital letters and commas. Joe said “exclamation marks”. I asked for an example of when we would use these:

***Lola:*** *We must save our school!*

Mia thought quotation marks could be used. I reminded her that this was a persuasive argument not a newspaper article, she then said question marks. When I asked how a question could be included in an argument I was delighted that Phil spoke up and said

*when you write a rhetorical question.*

I asked the class if anyone could give me an example of this:

***Catherine:*** *There are plenty of schools in Christchurch, but what about businesses?*

***Bobby:*** *I want the school to close; do you?*

We talked about how persuasive their arguments needed to be as they were the basis for the debate. After setting the timer so the students could spend some time reviewing and editing their arguments, Henrietta and Chloe approached me as they had been absent all week and asked me what they should do. As there were only ten minutes and no point in them starting a task without scaffolding I asked them if they would like to be councillors listening to the debate and deciding who they sided with. Both agreed keenly and then spent the time revising work from last week.

As I observed the students I felt that I had spent almost too much time during this unit on writing and not enough on drama; completely opposite to the first one. Yet, all students were very focused and engaged in perfecting their arguments for the debate and after roaming I saw a marked improvement in the amount they had written and the language they used.

We moved back into a group and the students sat on two sides; those **for** the school closing and those **against**. There was a chair on each side and I explained that one child could take the chair at a time. They could give their argument and they could respond to the other team, a similar strategy to the hot-seating we used in the first unit and one which aims to bring out additional information, ideas and attitudes (Ministry of Education, 2006b, p. 72). When other team members felt they could add more information or persuade more strongly they were to tap their team mate on the shoulder and take the chair.

This worked well and students not in the chair listened intently, waiting for a chance to have their say. There were five students, Abby, Dennis, Rebecca, Tim and Hermione who did not take the chair showing reservations to participate, even though they all had arguments in their books. Frank, Steve, Lola, Joe, Julian, Catherine and Bobby were very strong and had excellent comments to make.

Halfway through I interrupted the debate and asked the councillors to let us know who was giving the strongest argument so far and why. They mentioned that the team opposing the school closure was more persuasive because they repeated themselves less and had more ideas as to why the school should not close. This gave the teams a chance to review their arguments before continuing the debate, thus facilitating “reflecting in action” (Ministry of Education, 2006b) and allowing them to better express their ideas. I mentioned that there were a number of students I would like to see taking the chair more and having their say and then we started the second half of the debate. It was pleasing to see that some students who had sat back took my hint and tapped themselves in, including the five students mentioned earlier.

When the debate concluded I gave each team two minutes to choose a member to give a strong closing statement to the councillors. While they discussed this in their teams I said to Henrietta and Chloe that they needed to think really carefully about who had been more convincing and why, because I would ask them to explain this to the class.

Joe was voted to give a closing statement for the team supporting the school closure and Claudia for those against. I was pleased to see Claudia take the stand as she had not included herself during the debate. Joe made a much stronger statement and spoke for almost a minute, using what he had written in his planned argument, while Claudia was under-prepared. However, after stepping outside and discussing, the 'winner' Henrietta and Chloe returned to say that Claudia's team had been the most convincing based on her end statement. I quietly wondered if this was because she was a girl; if I had been better prepared for this I would have provided criteria for the judges giving the debate a fairer outcome.

I praised the class on their debate and we reflected on their arguments. I then set the class a task to write a fictional, narrative story based on what they had completed with me over the past two weeks. First they had two minutes to quick-write a plan. As they did this I noticed a number of confused faces glancing around the room. I felt that the narrative had not fitted in at all with their unit and only added it at the end as I needed the comparison of writing; the first three samples have all been narrative. This meant that there was less scaffolding and the students were under-prepared. To keep a case valid, certain measurements need to be considered (Stake, 1995). On reflection though this gave perhaps a better idea of what they were capable of at the end of four weeks of focused research as it was the students' work without teacher input.

We stopped after the quick-write and students volunteered to share their ideas:

Catherine, Joe and Fudge gave short lists of words that were going to prompt them; *Earthquake, February, Mrs Carson, Councillors, School closing etc...*

I then gave a short example of what could make a narrative story:

*Mr Jones was a music teacher. He loved his job and working with all the students. One day a terrible earthquake struck causing horrendous damage all over the city. Many buildings were destroyed and the businesses that used those buildings were suddenly out of work. The city council decided that a school should be closed down and used as a business hub, because it was far more important that money was coming into the city.*

*Mr Jones was very upset. Where would he work? What would he do? ...*

I set the timer for 18 minutes (not very long but it was all the time we had!) and the students began writing. There was still some confusion as I looked around and I did feel bad about this.

Julian in particular did not look happy; as a low-ability student, scaffolding the writing had played a large part in adding to his motivation. Nonetheless, I roamed around and saw the beginnings of some excellent ideas so after 6 minutes I paused the timer and asked if anyone would like to share their first paragraph. Phil, Skye and Catherine read theirs out and they were excellent examples for the class. When we restarted the timer all heads were down and the writing was far more motivated than it had been. When time was up I asked them to spend five minutes editing and then three minutes writing their final journal entry including a sentence saying if they felt their writing had improved or not, and why. Before letting them go I asked for a show of hands, who felt their writing had improved and most went up which was pleasing to see.

After mentioning I was disappointed with the balance of writing and drama in the data collection, the class teacher pointed out that may have been so but the attitude of the students was terrific and their levels had definitely shown an improvement when she marked them against the National Standards, so she was happy. I was to return the following week to record three interviews with students based on their attitudes to writing and the data collection.

## **Chapter Six: National Standards and Reporting Changes in Writing**

### **6.1 What are the National Standards?**

As mentioned in Chapter Two, The New Zealand National Standards set expectations that students need to meet in reading, writing and mathematics in the first eight years of school. Schools must aim for their students to achieve to the standards, which are then reported on to parents, making them better aware of where their child sits in line with the expected levels across the country. The National Standards came into effect in schools with pupils in Years One to Eight in 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2009a).

Many schools have queried the National Standards since they came into action, with concerns that they mean extra work for teachers and a reduction in the equity of assessment. Standards require a marking system using overall teacher judgement meaning individual teachers could mark inconsistently. There are also concerns over systems to ensure fairness in implementation of the Standards across schools and that they may provoke an element of 'teaching to the test'. Through this study, I wanted to explore whether the National Standards could be incorporated easily into writing assessment in a reliable and valid manner. The study further aimed to evaluate whether the writing features incorporated within the Standards could be taught by facilitating a creative teaching programme through incorporating drama with writing.

### **6.2 Participant Description**

The class I worked with in this research project was made up of 28 students (13 boys, 15 girls) in a composite Year Five and Six classroom. New Zealand's National Standards state that by the end of the year students in Year Five should be working at Level 3a and students in Year Six should be working at Level 3b. In this class, 13 of the students were achieving at or above their expected age level and 15 students were achieving below the expected National Standard for writing before the teaching units began. Of those students achieving below, seven were achieving far below at Levels 2a and under, indicating writing skills well below the expected range.

Four of the students in the class had slower processing skills requiring the aid of visual methods. These difficulties have impacted upon their written language throughout their schooling and resulted in the frequent assistance of a teacher aid in the classroom. I have used the results of two



of those students, Julian and Dennis, in this thesis. The classroom teacher also informed me that a lack of confidence in their own abilities was a key factor leading to problems in writing for these students.

Initial testing was completed by the classroom teacher at the beginning of the year giving the students their set writing levels. The school uses a set of writing progressions based on the New Zealand curriculum Literacy Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, 2010) that they have adapted to assess children's writing levels. The school progressions are split into two halves; surface features: testing spelling, punctuation, tense, grammar, proofreading; and deeper features: testing structure, voice, sentences, vocabulary, language features and editing skills. I adapted these school-based writing progressions to include the National Standard indicators for the purposes of this research.

The study was completed with the whole class for ease of integration into the school day and in fairness to the students and classroom teacher. It would not have been feasible to exclude six children from their normal lessons for the purposes of this research. Moreover, the whole class did benefit from this study as it became a large part of their writing programme.

### **6.3 Case study participants**

To examine the effects of the teaching on a broad range of students in the classroom, six students (three male, three female) from the class were selected as focus children for analysis based on their assessed levels of learning. Two students (Henrietta and Lola) were working beyond the National Standards at Level 3b-4a. Two students (Frank and Emma) were working at Level 2b-3a which is at the standard and two students (Julian and Dennis) were working towards the standards, writing at Level 2a. As detailed above, these levels were determined by the classroom teacher's own assessment using the set school writing progressions. As the teaching units progressed and I collected feedback and writing samples from the students, it was clear to see that all had very differing levels of enjoyment when it came to writing. Henrietta and Lola both enjoyed writing. However, Henrietta tended to rush her work and put in little effort if expected to follow a set task, while Lola enjoyed sharing her work with an audience and edited to achieve the best result possible. Frank and Emma also had differing views. Emma enjoyed writing and put in great effort, while Frank was often unsure of the task and needed reassurance and motivation to complete his work. Dennis had many learning difficulties and required the assistance of a teacher

aid in writing, while Julian had an intense dislike of writing and chose to procrastinate and rush through his work.

## **6.4 Procedure**

As outlined in Chapter Three, I measured the students' progress throughout the research through the collection of a number of sources. Interviews were completed at the end of each teaching unit and daily motivation charts and journals entries were collected to track motivation. In addition to this, quantitative analysis was used to track any changes in the students' writing as a result of their participation in the drama teaching. To complete the quantitative analysis I selected specific writing samples from each of the six participants. Each student in the class wrote a number of times throughout the teaching units. However, I decided for comparison to use one sample from the beginning of each unit and one from the end, giving four samples for each child. The class were given a total of 35 minutes to complete which included 5 minutes for thinking, 20 minutes for writing and 10 minutes for editing (though this often wasn't all completed within the same session due to a lack of time).

Writing sample one was a narrative diary entry written near the beginning of the Pioneers unit while the students were in role. It was entirely fictional but based on events that had been fed into the drama. Students were asked to write for 20 minutes with the writing scaffolded through the use of drama. Teacher support was given with initial modelling of the layout as well as the sharing of well-written examples. Samples two and three were set up in a similar way. The second sample of writing came at the end of the first teaching unit and was a narrative story. The students reviewed all the information they had learnt over the unit, including any other writing they had done and used that to write a story based around the voyage of a pioneer to New Zealand. Again it was fictional but based on true events.

The third sample was written near the beginning of the second teaching unit and was a narrative recount of the students' experiences during the earthquake. It was fictional, however, and writers could include any information they liked and it could be written from a different point of view. Unlike the previous three writing samples, the fourth was unassisted and included to show a comparison at the conclusion of the teaching units. Although it was written in a similar way to the preceding tasks, as a narrative story based on a school closure due to the earthquakes from the students' characters' points of view, it was unscaffolded because the teaching up until then would

have better suited a recount format of writing. Each sample was written in a narrative context to give a continuity of writing features that would have been more difficult if having to compare poetic and transactional writing.

During analysis I constructed an individual table containing the selected writing features incorporated from the school's writing progressions and the National Standards for each of the six students. The table thus included surface and deeper features of writing to track changes occurring in both areas. My research was aimed at measuring the motivation and engagement of writing that occurred through the incorporation of a drama and writing unit. However, I felt it was important to include a focus on its effect on surface and deeper features of writing to see if the drama and focused writing activities did indeed make a difference to these. There was also a particular focus on the correct use of speech marks as there was some explicit teaching on this surface level skill given that it was a notable area of need in the class and it aligned with the style of writing the students were producing within the drama. The tables were also written as an indicator of the individual needs of each student and the areas they required further development in. Each analysis was given to the classroom teacher for this purpose.

The following writing measures were compared:

Writing Characteristic	Analysis Used
Total word count	1. The total number of words written by each student was counted and recorded.
Correct use of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full stops</li> <li>• Commas</li> <li>• Speech marks</li> <li>• Exclamation marks</li> <li>• Question marks</li> </ul>	1. Each punctuation feature written correctly was counted and marked out of a total that could have been used in the writing including punctuation that was omitted.  Eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Today every one was so so sike there was just a wedding some people didn't show up (original)</i></li> <li>• <i>Today everyone was so so sick. There was just a wedding, some people didn't show up. (edited)</i></li> </ul> In the example Julian has missed two full stops and a comma. After analysis his mark for the full stops would be 0/2.
Correct spelling word count	1. The number of words spelt correctly was totaled and

	<p>recorded.</p> <p>2. Types of spelling errors were also recorded to indicate student difficulties in that area and a need for further development.</p> <p>Eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Today everyone was so so sike</i></li> </ul> <p>Julian has misspelled the word 'sick' showing a difficulty with the 'ck' grapheme.</p>
Number of paragraphs used correctly	<p>1. The proportion of paragraphs included correctly was calculated.</p> <p>2. When the sample included one paragraph it was recorded as n/a.</p> <p>3. When the sample was written in more than one paragraph it was marked as the number correctly shown out of the total number of possible paragraphs.</p>
<p>Sentence count – including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of simple sentences used</li> <li>• Number of compound/complex sentences used</li> </ul>	<p>1. Samples were edited to include any missing punctuation (e.g. full stops).</p> <p>2. The number of sentences in the edited sample was counted.</p> <p>3. Sentences were then identified as either simple or compound/complex and the number of these recorded.</p> <p>4. Conjunctions were recorded to show the variety used by each student.</p>
Use of subject-specific vocabulary	<p>1. Subject-specific vocabulary and emotive language used in each sample was counted and recorded.</p>
Use of emotive language	

## 6.5 Teaching Programme

Field work was completed over four weeks of the school year. The first data collection was in Term One running across two weeks in which there were nine daily 90 minute sessions. The second collection continued in Term Three and was conducted over the same amount of time to ensure continuity.

The majority of the teaching sessions included a writing task that followed a drama activity. Each drama activity had the purpose of introducing students to the story and scaffolding ideas so when students began to write they had a strong understanding of what to do and were emotionally connected to the characters and setting occurring in the drama. The teaching consisted of a strong focus on motivation and engagement stemming from the drama input. There was a more limited explicit focus on the features of writing in the hope that these would improve naturally with practice. The first teaching unit concentrated more on the incorporation of drama and writing activities that could be used alongside each session, whilst the second unit had a strong focus on writing and using the children's prior knowledge as inspiration. A more detailed breakdown of the teaching schedule can be found in Chapters Four and Five, and a detailed lesson plan is attached as Appendix A.

## **6.6 Inter-rater Reliability:**

Inter-rater reliability was calculated to ensure that the numbers calculated from the writing sample analysis were valid. The usual classroom teacher was shown the correct analysis of each writing sample and how to grade each independent area. She then independently re-analysed three samples for each of the students. Inter-rater reliability ranged from 0.86-0.95 across the samples, showing consistency in analysis across raters. To analyse the students' writing samples, I compared the variables across a table. After marking each section using the measures above (see procedure section) I was able to compare the four results for each student and see improvements as well as any areas that still require further teaching input.

Below I have included each student's table of analysed results with an explanation of the findings.

## **6.7 Results:**

### **Working beyond the National Standard**

#### **Henrietta**

Henrietta enjoys writing and can capture the emotion of her characters with fluency and ease, yet she has a tendency to put in little effort when given limitations to what she can write.

Prior to the teaching units Henrietta could write a large amount in a given time and had little trouble with spelling and sentence variation. The table suggests these areas have shown little

change over time. Henrietta has no apparent difficulty with basic punctuation during the unit. However, as referred to in Chapter Seven, Henrietta has shown improved motivation through her comments regarding the use of drama in the writing programme. Analysis of her writing samples indicates that this increased motivation has impacted her use of emotive language. For example, in sample one she included no emotive language but in sample two she wrote:

*The blood splattering was unbearable, I closed my eyes...*

Although Henrietta's correct use of speech marks did not alter significantly after explicit teaching, this feature was mastered prior to implementation of the teaching programme. Henrietta's most notable area requiring development appears to be in the correct use of paragraphs to separate ideas. While three of her four samples of writing contain paragraphs, at least half of them are written incorrectly.

Child: Henrietta – Level 3b-4a – Working Beyond					
Punctuation/ Characteristics	Times Recorded				Notes
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4	
<b>Total word count</b>	190	152	192	117	Missed most of week leading up to sample 4.
<b>Full Stops</b>	14/15	13/14	9/10	6/7	
<b>Commas</b>	2/5	1/3	1/8	4/5	Improvement in use of commas.
<b>Speech Marks</b>	n/a	3/3	1/1	2/2	
<b>Exclamation marks</b>	2/2	2/2	1/2	1/1	
<b>Question Marks</b>	n/a	1/1	n/a	1/1	
<b>Spelling words correct</b>	187/190	151/152	189/192	116/117	One word in sample one only had an apostrophe missing – <i>'fathers'</i> instead of <i>'father's'</i>  Difficulty with apostrophes, double letters, si/ti sounds, sounding out
<b>Paragraphs</b>	1/2	n/a	1/3	1/2	Area for development
<b>Sentence Count</b>	17	15	11	8	
<b>Simple Sentences</b>	8	9	3	2	

<b>Compound/ complex sentences</b>	9	6	8	6	<b>Conjunctions used: when, as, and, but,</b>			
<b>Subject-Specific Vocabulary (words/phrases)</b>	7	7	6	6	<b>Sample 1</b>	<b>Sample 2</b>	<b>Sample 3</b>	<b>Sample 4</b>
					Fresh fish Downstairs Basins and buckets Stench of 'you know what' Puddles Bundles Temperatures	Stained ground Blood splattering Filth Poster Freedom	Bunk Shaky Coasteering Rumbling Shaking Earthquake	Enrolment School Employees City council Hub Principal
<b>Emotive Language (words/phrases)</b>	none	1	5	3	<b>Sample 1</b>	<b>Sample 2</b>	<b>Sample 3</b>	<b>Sample 4</b>
					n/a	'The blood splattering was unbearable, I closed my eyes'	Safe Alarm bell in my head Heart racing Giggling Laughter	Anger Mad arguments

## Lola

Lola prefers to write in the third person and her descriptive language paints a clear picture of the story. Analysis of Lola's writing has shown improved motivation impacting on her use of emotive language. For example, in sample one she included simple words like 'nervous and kind' but in sample two she used more advanced vocabulary including 'curiosity, composed and hysterics'. Lola includes subject-specific vocabulary frequently in her writing indicating strong engagement throughout the teaching tasks when the vocabulary was used throughout the drama.

When including surface features in her writing Lola shows a particular strength in the use of full stops and spelling and appears to be making progress across the teaching unit in her use of commas displaying an increase from correctly using zero out of one included comma in sample one to including commas correctly four out of six times in sample four. However, the analysis shows that Lola does not include many exclamation marks and question marks in her writing. There was a focus on the use of speech marks during the drama and Lola has not used any in her writing suggesting more explicit teaching is needed in this area. Her use of paragraphs showed

improvement across each writing sample with some incorrect use in samples one and two compared to correct use two out of two times in sample four.

Child: Lola – Level 3b – Working Beyond								
Punctuation/ Characteristics	Times Recorded				Notes			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4				
Total word count	70	240	68	120				
Full Stops	5/5	18/18	6/6	9/9	Strong use of full stops.			
Commas	0/1	3/3	3/2	4/6	Showing improvement.			
Speech Marks	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Area for development.			
Exclamation marks	n/a	n/a	0/1	1/1	Showing improvement.			
Question Marks	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Area for development.			
Spelling words correct	69/70	237/240	68/68	114/120	A strong speller. Less time spent on sample 4 shows a lack of editing.  Difficulty with s/c sounds and double letters.			
Paragraphs	1/2	2/4	n/a	2/2				
Sentence count	6	18	6	10				
Simple Sentences	1	3	2	4				
Compound/complex sentences	5	15	4	6	Conjunctions used: as, so, but, and, when, either			
Subject-Specific Vocabulary (words/phrases)	3	8	4	5	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					Boarded Cabin Voyage	Dock London Sailing New Zealand Portmanteau Cabin Boarding Ship	Rumbling Turtle Safe February 22nd	Business School Meeting Councillors shops
Emotive Language (words / phrases)	3	5	2	5	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					Nervous	Curiosity	Screaming	Great



					Looking kind forward	Complaining Composed Hysterics sob	calm	Joy Disappointed Screamed cried
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## Working at the National Standard

### Frank

Frank writes with fluency and good recall of the topic. He empathises strongly with his characters and enjoys sharing his writing.

Frank's ideas often appear confused because of a lack of punctuation and the table shows exclamation marks, question marks and paragraphs are an area for development.

As referred to in Chapter Seven, Frank has shown improved motivation through his comments regarding the use of drama in the writing programme. In addition to this analysis of Frank's writing has also shown improved motivation which has impacted on his use of emotive language. For example, in sample one he used no emotive language but in sample three and four he used more advanced vocabulary including 'terrible and devastated'. Frank has also shown a substantial increase in the amount he has written from only 63 words in sample one compared to 153 words in sample two, indicating increased engagement in the task. His use of subject-specific vocabulary shows a better understanding of the topic which could be attributed to engagement in the drama and he has also developed his use of speech marks in response to some focused teaching in this area. Although these have dropped again in the fourth sample, that piece of writing was unscaffolded and included no teacher assistance.

Child: Frank – Level 2b – Working At					
Punctuation/ Characteristics	Times Recorded				Notes
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4	
Total word count	63	153	195	144	Less scaffolding for sample 4.
Full Stops	1/4	3/9	10/17	3/11	Has shown improvement.

<b>Commas</b>	2/5	1/8	0/9	2/11	No clear improvement.			
<b>Speech Marks</b>	n/a	1/3	5/3	0/5	Strong in sample two and three.			
<b>Exclamation marks</b>	n/a	n/a	0/5	n/a				
<b>Question Marks</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Area for development.			
<b>Spelling words correct</b>	56/63	142/153	182/13	135/144	Misspells names frequently. <b>Difficulty with short vowel sounds, double letters, s/ch sounds,</b>			
<b>Paragraphs</b>	n/a	1/5	1/6	1/3	Area for development.			
<b>Sentence count</b>	4	9	22	10	Showing improvement.			
<b>Simple Sentences</b>	1	2	10	3	Frank rarely uses punctuation. The ones I have included are the closest to sentences he has used, yet they are missing commas.  <b>Conjunctions used: and, until, which, when, because, but, so</b>			
<b>Compound /complex Sentences</b>	3	7	12	7				
<b>Subject-Specific Vocabulary (words/phrases)</b>	3	7	9	8	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					Boarded	Charlotte Jane	Camp	School
					Ship	New Zealand	Kayaking	Feb
					Steerage	Sir Gibbon Wakefield Pack Country Settled Board	Instructors Cabin Quake Shaking Aftershocks Bumpy trip rubble	Quake Hub Business Meeting Staff Council
<b>Emotive Language (words/phrases)</b>	None	1	8	3	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					n/a	"felt sad to leave his home country"	Hate Yay Terrible Screaming Panic Not too confident Didn't enjoy annoying	Fair Devastated tears

## Emma

Emma is a fluent and expressive writer and often focuses on editing her work for an audience.

She has shown increased engagement in the writing tasks through a significant increase in the amount she has written from 93 words in sample one compared to 261 words in sample three, even though they have dropped again in the unscaffolded fourth writing sample. Emma's use of subject-specific vocabulary also indicates a stronger understanding of the topic which could be linked to better engagement during the teaching units.

Analysis of Emma's writing samples indicate improvement in her use of emotive language attributing to the impact in motivation from the teaching unit. For example, in sample one she included no emotive language but in sample two she wrote:

*whispered Dianne, with tears in her eyes*

Emma shows increasing use of surface features across the samples and improvement in the number of complex and compound sentences she has written. Her use of question marks is limited; however this could be because they did not fit into her written work. While Emma consistently uses speech marks correctly, she has increased in the amount of times she is using them in her writing which could be attributed to the explicit teaching that occurred in this area.

Child: Emma – Level 2b-3a – Working At					
Punctuation/ Characteristics	Times Recorded				Notes
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4	
<b>Total word count</b>	93	160	261	140	A strong writer. Not as much scaffolding spent on sample 4.
<b>Full Stops</b>	8/8	4/7	19/20	7/7	Increasing use of full stops.
<b>Commas</b>	1/3	3/5	3/6	5/8	Increasing use of commas.
<b>Speech Marks</b>	n/a	5/5	4/4	6/6	Increasing use of speech marks.

<b>Exclamation marks</b>	0/1	n/a	1/2	2/2	Improvement in use of exclamation marks.			
<b>Question Marks</b>	n/a	n/a	0/1	n/a				
<b>Spelling words correct</b>	90/93	156/160	259/261	136/140	1. One word missing an apostrophe 2. Two words written as two words instead of one 3. <b>Difficulty with double letters</b>			
<b>Paragraphs</b>	n/a	2/2	2/5	2/2	An area for development.			
<b>Sentence count</b>	8	8	21	8				
<b>Simple Sentences</b>	3	0	3	1	Could improve use of simple sentences for effect.			
<b>Compound /complex Sentences</b>	5	8	17	7	Emma usually writes in compound sentences.  <b>Conjunctions used: but, so, because, and, when, as</b>			
<b>Subject-Specific Vocabulary (words/phrases)</b>	None	3	9	5	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					n/a	maid mechanic thin, dirty blankets	Guide Art gallery Painting Shake Earthquake Sirens Alarms Turtle Jolting	Councillor Meeting School Neighbours Office
<b>Emotive Language (words/phrases)</b>	None	4	3	4	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					n/a	"arms aching and sore" "I said softly" "whispered Dianne, with tears in her eyes"	Crying Heart stopped' I wish I never..."	Shouts and boos Screamed Complaint Huge mistake

## Working towards the National Standard

### Julian

As referred to in Chapter Seven, Julian has shown improved motivation through his comments regarding the use of drama in the writing programme.

Julian's writing samples also show improved motivation impacting on his use of emotive language. For example, in samples one and two he used no emotive language but in samples three and four he included three words 'worried, great and complaints'. Julian has also significantly increased the amount he has written from only 36 words in sample one compared to 101 words in sample two, indicating increased engagement in the task. The amount he wrote dropped again slightly in sample three but still remained a lot higher than his initial efforts. Julian's use of subject-specific vocabulary shows a better understanding of the topic in samples two, three and four which could be attributed to engagement in the drama

Julian displays strong areas of need in his use of surface features and difficulty when spelling. He writes using a variety of sentence types and without the correct punctuation his work is often difficult to read. However, the table below indicates that Julian's punctuation has shown progress, in particular his use of full stops which he wrote correctly two out of five times in sample one compared to inserting them correctly four times in four attempts in sample four. Although the focus on speech marks had no effect on Julian's writing, as a student writing below the national expectation, he needed to improve in more basic surface features first.

Child: Julian – Level 2a – Working Towards					
Punctuation/ Characteristics	Times Recorded				Notes
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4	
<b>Total word count</b>	36	101	83	45	Julian found the middle two samples a lot easier. The 4 <sup>th</sup> sample included a lot less scaffolding and this shows in his word count.
<b>Full Stops</b>	2/5	0/7	1/8	4/4	A definite improvement in Julian's use of full stops.
<b>Commas</b>	0/1	0/4	1/3	0/1	
<b>Speech Marks</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<b>Exclamation marks</b>	n/a	n/a	0/1	n/a	
<b>Question Marks</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	A focus point for future writing.
<b>Spelling words correct</b>	33/36	74/101	68/83	32/45	Often replacing 'b' with 'd', difficulty with short vowel sounds

<b>Paragraphs</b>	n/a	1/3	1/3	n/a				
<b>Sentence count</b>	5	7	9	4				
<b>Simple Sentences</b>	3	2	2	2	Julian is missing nearly all necessary punctuation to ensure his writing makes sense. His use of full stops has improved his sentence structure dramatically. <b>Conjunctions used: so, when, but, because, and.</b>			
<b>Compound/complex Sentences</b>	2	5	7	2				
<b>Subject-Specific Vocabulary (words/phrases)</b>	None	5	3	5	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					n/a	boarding Charlotte Jane smuggled swimming overboard	Shaking shock Liquefaction	Closed Opened businesses school community
<b>Emotive Language (words/phrases)</b>	None	none	1	2	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					n/a	n/a	worried	Great complaints

## Dennis

Dennis takes a long time to process ideas and as a result does not get much written in the allotted time.

Dennis displays an improvement in motivation impacting on his use of emotive language in his writing samples. For example, in sample one he included simple words like 'great' but in sample four he used more advanced vocabulary including 'horrifying'.

Dennis also doubled the amount he has written which was a significant achievement for him, writing only 18 words in sample one compared to 36 words in sample three. This indicates increased engagement in the task.

Although Dennis usually writes in simple sentences, he rarely uses punctuation making them difficult to identify. The focus on speech marks has made no difference to Dennis' writing. However this is not surprising given that he is achieving below the required level and a more explicit focus on full stops and capital letters would be more beneficial for his writing.

The table below indicates that Dennis can spell most sight words correctly but has difficulty with recognising short vowel sounds and also needs further assistance to include paragraphs in his writing.

Child: Dennis – Level 2a – Working Towards								
	Times Recorded				Notes			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4				
<b>Total word count</b>	18	15	36	20				
<b>Full stops</b>	1/5	2/2	1/1	2/3	Sample 3: Wrote one very long sentence connected by 'and'. Improvement in number of full stops used.			
<b>Commas</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Area for development.			
<b>Speech marks</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Area for development.			
<b>Exclamation marks</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	0/1	Area for development.			
<b>Question marks</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Area for development.			
<b>Spelling words correct</b>	11/18	13/15	33/36	15/20	<b>Difficulty with short vowel sounds, f/v sound</b>			
<b>Paragraphs</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Does not write enough to warrant paragraphs.			
<b>Sentence count</b>	5	2	1	3				
<b>Simple Sentences</b>	5	2	0	1	Sample 3: could be split into two or three shorter sentences.			
<b>Compound/complex Sentences</b>	0	0	1	2	<b>Conjunctions used: and, because</b>			
<b>Subject-Specific Vocabulary (words /phrases)</b>	3	1	2	3	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					New Zealand	Boat	Earthquake	Earthquake
					History		February 22nd	February
					Ship			6.3 magnitude
<b>Emotive Language (words /phrases)</b>	3	2	4	2	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
					Wonderful	Fun	Scary	Horrifying
					Love	Liked	Sad	scary
					Great		Horrible happy	

## 6.8 Summary

The conclusion of the teaching units brought with it an assumption that there would be improvement in the students' writing. Although I did find that their surface features on the whole had not improved greatly, this was not a large surprise as the process drama had focused more on their deeper understanding of the topic and becoming emotionally involved with the people and their journey.

The most encouraging results were in the amount written by each student and in the inclusion of subject-specific vocabulary and emotive language. The teaching units used drama explicitly to inspire motivation within writing, and analysis of written scripts indicates this has occurred. Students were engaged in the writing tasks and were able to relate these to the process dramas in which they were encouraged to think independently and take on roles to understand someone else's experience. The drama was a way of scaffolding and planning the writing, enabling students to write more fluently because they had a stronger understanding of the task. All six students, whose results have been tabulated above, have improved the amount they have written indicating that increased motivation in writing has directly affected their engagement in the task. Henrietta and Lola who were already working above the expected level of writing have increased specifically in the amount of emotive language they have used within their written work and it was apparent during the drama that they enjoyed becoming a character and imagining themselves within that role. Frank and Emma were working at the expected level of writing prior to beginning the unit and while both have made significant improvements in their use of emotive language and subject-specific vocabulary, Frank has shown a notable increase in the amount of writing he completed, indicating progress in his engagement of the task. Julian and Dennis who began the unit working towards the expected level of writing and with the largest dislike of writing have also shown progress in the emotive language, subject-specific vocabulary and amount they have written; a large improvement for both of them in the area of motivation. Results thus indicate that this creative teaching approach can be an effective facilitator of certain aspects of writing in children working at different levels.

While the units were focused on increasing motivation, a lesson on the proper use of speech marks was included in the second teaching unit following scaffolding using drama and the use of comic strips. This was in response to an emphasis on newspaper articles which had been



incorporated into both teaching blocks and required the appropriate setting out of quotes. When referring to the tables above, it can be seen that only two of the six students showed improvement in the amount of speech marks they used in their writing. Both Emma and Frank used speech marks increasingly in their writing tasks with Frank showing the most significant progress. Although Henrietta also used speech marks correctly, she had been doing this prior to the teaching units. Lola, Julian and Dennis showed no notable changes in their use of speech marks, but while Lola was capable of using them in her writing, both Julian and Dennis were writing at a considerably lower level and required more explicit teaching in the use of basic punctuation first. These results suggest that while it is possible to include a specific lesson on a surface feature within the creative teaching context, more teaching may be needed to show change in the skill.

Re-assessment following the completion of the teaching showed five of the six focus children progressed in their writing. Henrietta and Lola have both moved to a Level 4a. Frank is now working at Level 3a which for a Year Six student is still considered just below the National Standard and Emma is now working slightly above the expected level at 3a-3b. Julian and Dennis are both still working towards the expected standard, yet Julian, who made the strongest progress in his attitude has moved up to Level 2b. Dennis has remained at Level 2a but it should be noted that progress still occurred in the amount he wrote and in his correct use of full stops and spelling words. These levels were again determined by the classroom teacher's own assessment using the set school writing progressions, which she will use for reporting to parents. However, I also assessed the student writing using my own measures shown above and came to the same conclusions. These results strongly suggest that writing skills tracked in National Standards can be taught within a creative teaching programme.

I found the fourth sample of writing indicated reduced levels of progress. It was an unassisted piece of narrative writing which was included to balance the table of results. Although a more fitting piece of writing would have been a recount, this would not have shown a smooth comparison with the previous three samples. While it could be argued that unscaffolded writing would give a stronger indication of the student's learning without teacher input, it is not a consistent indicator when the prior three samples have been aided.

Overall this approach showed some movement on the deeper features of the students' writing samples, yet their level of improvement on surface feature characteristics such as punctuation and spelling has shown limited progress. As mentioned above the most promising improvement has been in that of the amount of text, showing that this approach had a positive effect on student motivation to write more. The teaching units supplied students with focused scaffolding making ideas more accessible and the inclination to write a lot easier. Results of the six selected students have shown little movement in their use of surface features which according to Graves (1994) could be attributed to the fact that there was little deliberate teaching in this area. While a small amount of time was spent on encouraging the use of speech marks through dramatic scaffolding and focused teaching, there was little progress suggesting that explicit teaching must be in place to make a change. This view goes against that of Beach and Bridwell who argue that learning happens implicitly with time (Beach & Bridwell, 1984) but follows that of the Ministry who encourage deliberate acts of teaching such as modelling and specific instruction in order for children to learn (Ministry of Education, 2006a).

The movement shown in the tables was strongest between samples one and two. The reasoning for this could be because the topic was a new one and the drama involved was inspiring. As expected, movement between samples two and three was less noticeable. Nonetheless, it must be taken into account that there was a full term of school between the samples and that any movement would be solely based on resumed classroom instruction. As mentioned above, the inclusion of sample four indicated limited successful moment perhaps due to the fact that the sample did not receive as much scaffolding as the previous three. Feedback from the classroom teacher has shown an overall increase in student writing interest since the unit took place. She stated:

*"About 75% of students shared learning with their parents at the interview and of those all chose to share writing. Their feeling of writing success was certainly boosted and they were more confident to let their parents see their work" (27.07.12).*

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, I wanted to explore whether the National Standards could be incorporated easily into writing assessment in a reliable and valid manner. The reliability data I included for assessment indicates a strong consistency between my results and those of the

classroom teacher when using my methods, suggesting the National Standards could be incorporated easily within an authentic writing lesson.

I also wanted to evaluate whether the writing features I integrated with the Standards could be taught by facilitating a creative teaching programme through incorporating drama with writing. The analysis of the students' writing samples indicates that while some changes can be made in response to a creative teaching programme teachers need to be aware of the need to directly target the particular writing skill they are interested in improving. "Learning needs to be focused in order to meet a particular purpose" (Ministry of Education, 2006a). Although the deliberate teaching of speech marks during this unit resulted in improvement for two of the six students, more time spent in this area could have shown better results.

## Chapter Seven: Learning Journeys

In this chapter I will discuss the material that came from the three participants I interviewed after the conclusion of each teaching block. As explained in the methodology chapter, these students participated in eighteen teaching sessions of ninety minutes as well as being interviewed. I facilitated the lessons, and also spent time observing and making notes on the children involved. The choices the students made during these lessons and the techniques they applied in each session gave practical as well as verbal answers to the question of ‘does drama improve writing?’

The entire class of 28 students participated in this study as I incorporated it into their general class programme. However, only 25 of those students and their parents permitted me to use their information. I then chose three students to interview that learn in very different ways and have writing levels of above, middle and below ability. I wanted to analyse samples of writing from students of differing ability to explore if this type of approach would be beneficial across all levels. Students achieving above the expected level obviously do not need as much assistance in writing. However if a process drama will enable them to attain more knowledge on the subject then I believe that it would be imprudent not to include them.

I have outlined the students’ background interests in writing first and then the rest of this chapter tracks each participant’s work processes and opinions of writing and drama in more detail. Their writing was also analysed in the previous chapter to provide a balanced view of the progress these students have made.

### 7.1 The Participants

#### Julian

Julian is a Year 5 five boy who was working at a Level 2b in writing at the beginning of the study. When he completed a questionnaire based around his likes and dislikes of writing at the beginning of the sessions he wrote that he dislikes writing and often cannot think of ideas. During the final interview he reiterated:

*not having a topic (is hard) and sometimes if I don't feel confident with my writing it kind of stops me a bit.*

Julian also added in the interview that he is a stubborn writer and will often procrastinate and waste time so he does not have to think about and therefore write as much. I noticed this myself during the teaching sessions with Julian searching for rubbers, wandering around the classroom and excusing himself to the bathroom a number of unnecessary times:

*if I don't wanna write, I don't wanna write!*

In an interview with the class teacher she pointed out that many of the students who find writing difficult will often use avoidance techniques to get out of writing:

*...yeah the avoidance is often, just mucking about or saying 'I'm thinking, I'm thinking, I'm thinking' and you know perfectly well they've had heaps of time to think and should be getting it down.*

## **Frank**

Frank is a Year Six boy who was working at Level 2b in writing prior to starting the teaching unit. He is a keen writer and very vocal about his ideas. He also finds writing difficult to begin with when it is left up to him to think of the ideas:

*I like just getting a topic to write about because if I don't get a topic I can't exactly like, get a good (piece of) writing, like it takes longer for me to write.*

In his initial questionnaire Frank wrote that motivation, having a task and being given ideas gave him a good grounding for wanting to write, but a lack of inspiration made it difficult. However, later in the same questionnaire he contradicted himself by stating:

*I think of ideas quick.*

In my opinion this indicates that Frank can think of ideas quickly and shows good motivation for writing. However, he lacks a confidence in his abilities sometimes and feels that he must be given foundation ideas by the teacher to be assured that he is on the right path.

## **Henrietta**

At the beginning of the unit Henrietta was working above the recommended level in writing at 3b-4a. She is a keen writer and mentioned during the interview that she enjoys this year because the class:

*have more writing for homework than maths!*

The research showed Henrietta to be a strong writer with imaginative ideas, although the teacher identified her as a student that puts minimum effort into her writing and that she could challenge herself more, particularly in the area of surface features. Henrietta enjoys having freedom in writing and made a point of saying that she does not enjoy being told to write a set amount on a set subject, she continues this by saying:

*(I) love putting my ideas on paper (and) writing whatever I want.*

Henrietta mentioned that being tired can stop her from wanting to write and put in effort to make her writing interesting but being:

*surrounded by objects, paintings or pictures...*

can lead into making writing even easier. It was interesting to see that while Henrietta enjoys unrestricted writing topics, she also wants inspiration for ideas and a starting point to fire her imagination. Henrietta concluded her opinions on writing by saying:

*I just come up with ideas really easily and so I like just writing them down.*

## **7.2 Tracking their journeys**

### **Julian**

Julian was increasingly focused in the drama sessions as they occurred. As time went on he began to take more leadership roles. Julian enjoyed all of the physical work yet felt frustrated when drama was shortened and less emphasis was placed on completing a whole scene:

*I like freeze frames too, but sometimes I wished we did skits just full through and then we could do the answers and everything.*

Julian began by acting in role as a father in the drama. He felt uncomfortable working so closely with a girl (his wife) and portrayed this during the role plays and freeze frames. He also found it difficult to get into the role of a character in a time he wasn't familiar with:

*The hard thing was actually thinking back then like what they'd be acting like. Like some people when they were children they're like running around being silly when it's not exactly what a child would do.*

When asked to write a diary entry of the day in role he wrote:

*Today was a pretty full on day we got on to the Chart Jane we unpacked and out of nowhere ther was a wedding theri was dancing and a band.*

*(I have not corrected Julian's writing in any way)*

This entry reveals no emotion as to how Julian felt about the wedding and dancing and is fairly short and to the point. This, according to his teacher, is customary of Julian who will usually produce the least amount possible without much additional information. Julian pointed out that he struggles more with finding ideas and this is why his writing is shorter and without detail:

*Without inspiration it's really hard and then I get all frustrated cos I can't think of anything.*

Two weeks later, after the process drama had finished the class were asked to review what they had learnt and write a narrative story about the Charlotte Jane. They had a certain amount of time and this is what Julian produced. He was writing very quickly the whole time and ran out of time to edit, so I have corrected underneath for understanding:

*100 years ago I was bording the chalet jane when we got on we fund wrdabin to sirprse it*

*One hundred years ago I was boarding the Charlotte Jane. When we got on board we found our cabin. To our surprise it was diger than wr hous*

*was bigger than our house!*

*Now were to days in a man was noked over drode by a drunk man had sugled alkohol*

Now we're two days in. A man was knocked overboard by a drunk man who had smuggled alcohol.

*lukely it was a hot day so kids were swiming in the sats so he was saved we allwas get pork*

Luckily it was a hot day so kids were swimming in the sea, so he was saved. We always get pork

*for dinere but its good pork so I don't care today thire is a weding but its not going to be*

for dinner, but it's good pork so I don't care. Today there is a wedding, but it's not going to be

*that good because all they want to do is kiss and have a sime and im not invite*

that good because all they want to do is kiss and have a good time and I'm not invited.

This piece of writing shows a more detailed description of the boat and gives us an idea of emotion. In a discussion with Julian's teacher she mentioned she was impressed by the change in his writing. Julian was very proud of the amount he had written and I believe that he has added

elements of his learning into the piece as well. He had also changed his ideas on writing and when asked about the balance of drama and writing over the two weeks responded:

*well sometimes, with different people it's different. But some people wish it was all drama but I, I like prefer both because it's just, um, two of my favourite things!*

This is a far cry from his comments on writing in the initial questionnaire:

*Question 5: What do you find easy about writing?*

*Julian: nothing*

For the second teaching unit based around the Canterbury earthquake Julian was enthusiastic about the teaching sessions and was very enthusiastic when opening the magic curtain and listening to instructions. There was more focus on writing in the second unit and many children, including Julian were dismayed when they discovered this. The first writing task was a narrative recount. The children brainstormed ideas recalling facts and memories from the February earthquake and turned it into a story. Julian wasted no time in writing and produced an engaging piece based around his experience.

*As soon as it started shaking, I thought here we go again but it got bigger and bigger.*

*Mum was in town so I got word She took forever to pick me up After two hours mum picked me up When we got home ever thing was on the floor. Then sundly thire was another after shok. But this time it was different.*

*heaps of likwaftshon came up from under the deck. Water went everywhere*

*Five minity later Dad got home.*

When the second data collection had finished and Julian was asked what his favourite piece of writing had been he mentioned the earthquake recount written above:

*yeah they were quite good... I reckon cos you said we could make some things fictional up but kind of just keep it stuck to the story line.*

He then went on to mention a second piece of writing he had found difficult but really enjoyed:

*probably the newspaper articles, but that was really fun though... It was kind of just the feel, it was probably the easiest piece of writing cos...yeah.*



*The earthquake hit many suburbs around the city but in particular the central city where Jack and Leo's café was badly struck they were forced to move out and think of new ideas*

*When asked about plans for the future Leo said "we could work out of a container"*

Julian's writing has shown huge progress across the four weeks of drama input. His attitude has changed completely and he is procrastinating less when given a writing task. The largest changes appear to be in the amount that Julian writes and his enthusiasm for starting. In fact as the teacher mentioned to me:

*About 75% of students shared learning with their parents at the interview and of those all chose to share writing...their feeling of writing success was certainly boosted and they were more confident to let their parents see their work.*

Julian was one of these students. The teacher continued to inform me that Julian told his mother at the interview that writing was now his second favourite subject at school! Quite an achievement.

## **Frank**

Frank was enthusiastic from the start in the process dramas. He was engaged and gave everything a go with great gusto. This didn't disintegrate over the second unit either and Frank was always one of the first to jump up to open the magic curtain. He enjoyed sharing his ideas and frequently volunteered to give everything a go and vocalise his thoughts:

*I really loved the drama, there was nothing bad about it and cos I really enjoyed doing the freeze frames with you...because it gave people a chance to see what we were thinking and how we felt.*

After creating his first character, which included a wife and students, Frank was very involved in the freeze frames and tried to be as realistic as possible. His first diary entry read:

*Day 1 september 7th 1850 Boarding ship*

*We boarded the ship I found my wife Cecilia Green and my four kids we were in staterooms and settled in pretty well until my wife wanted my help I had to pretend to do a crossword to get out of it the kids Thomas, Julia, Greg and Archie went to sleep quick which gave me some alone time with my wife.*

I found reading this very informative and totally amusing as the entry gave me a practical recount that could have happened. A few days later Frank wrote another diary entry:

*7th Oct 1850 The Sickness*

*Oh my God most people are pukeing I and my dad are trying to help I can't believe my eyes when all the sick people are vomiting. All of a sudden dad no not dad he vomited it looks like it's all up to me.*

*Many babies dies over the course of a month I was hored with it I had to help lots of sick pacents they were in pain looking like they were going to die I'm felling sick just looking at it I'm Going to cry.*

This entry, though rather exaggerative of what actually happened, shows a lot more emotion into the situation. His description is showing improvement, yet the details could include more adjectives. Frank wrote this from a different point of view, in this entry he was Elsie, helping her seasick father, Dr Barker, with all the patients on board.

Frank felt the drama really helped with his writing and believed it really was showing improvement because of the class time spent developing the story:

*...because um, when we do drama, it's easy, like we can write about what we did in drama and it's better too, and it gives us a topic to write about and we already have some ideas in our head of what we just did.*

When the Pioneers drama was complete the class were asked to write a narrative story using the information they had learnt. Frank produced the following piece.

*I'm going to tell all you about the sharlot jane that landed here over 100 years ago my grate grate grandfather Frank green and his wife selea green they were convinced to come to NZ by a man sir gibbon wakefield in town square*

*When they found out they were aloud to board for free we started to pack come on kids hurry we have only little time he said.*

*When they were leaving the kids felt sad because he had to leav behind his home country but he knew it was to live a better life.*

This piece of writing shows less emotion than his second sample with details of the country and ship being excluded. However, what the writing does show is a strong recall of information by Frank showing he had retained important details. It also shows that Frank needs time spent on editing his surface features.

On conclusion of the interview following the first teaching unit Frank's final thoughts on the use of drama to aid writing were:

*I'd say that um, it's something really cool to do because if you do drama it helps with your writing and it boosts up your acting and you're like, um your writing and other things and it just really helps.*

As mentioned above the second teaching unit was based on the classes' prior knowledge of the Canterbury Earthquake. It had much less of a focus on drama and required more focused writing sessions by the students. Frank showed surprise at this, as he and the other students were initially disappointed when this happened:

*Yeah I'm surprised that um, when we were doing the pioneers we did heaps of freeze frames and during these sessions we didn't do like half as many freeze frames. Cos normally each time you'd give us some more freeze frames to do, but this time we spent more time on the writing.*

His writing indicated improvement though. Frank was increasing his word count and his use of punctuation. The sample below shows his recount of the February earthquake when Frank was on school camp. While a large amount of punctuation is absent, his use of quotation marks is strong and his description is more detailed:

*Day two of camp just about to go kiaking "gee I hate these things" the instructors talk too much they just go on and on. Yay back at the cabin. "Frank\* come on" Simon\* yells "I'll be there soon" I yell "wow it's a quake" the cabin starts shaking "oh-no this is terable, Everyone runs onto the feild screaming we all panic everyone is worrying about theri family and friends more aftershocks happen. I'm not too confordent" we all want to go home.*

*(this is only a sample of Frank's whole piece of writing*

*\*names have been changed in writing)*

Scaffolding throughout the drama appeared to be aiding Frank's ideas as well as the insert of prior knowledge based on the topic. When asked about what he would remember most from the second data collection Frank said:

*I just remember doing newspaper articles. And if I remember my writing I'll remember the drama because we wrote about what drama we did...and actually think of ideas, like if I'd done some drama I would write about what I'd done in the drama.*

Here is a newspaper article written by Frank showing some detailed ideas and good use of surface features taught.

*A high magnitude earthquake on 22nd feb has bisnesses struggleing to hang on. After talking to bissness owner shane smith about his demolished fat cake factory and bissness around christchurch.*

*The response from our questons, "well shane smith how will you hold up"*

*"we can find a new location for our factory." we also asked "what will you do untill you find a new bissness?" "well we will have to ues the fat cake van."*

*The quake has dfamaged lots of houses, bildings and factorys the quake was a 6.3 a high magnitude earthquake we've heard this quake brought down lots of houes.*

Frank's journey is an interesting one. Out of the three students shown here he had perhaps the most enthusiasm for the topic and although he mentioned in his initial questionnaire that he struggled to find inspiration, Frank always wrote with avidity. His surface features do show progress and the amount he has written indicates a much better flow of ideas. Frank is extremely animated when he describes how drama has helped his writing and his enjoyment of the activities we completed as a class. I believe this enjoyment is the largest show of progress in Frank's learning and as mentioned in Chapter Two by O'Neill (1995) the experience of drama is what engages students to learn. Process drama in particular with its range of role taking and lack of pressured acting techniques allows students to feel more at ease.

## Henrietta

Henrietta is a quiet member of the class, yet she was enthusiastic during the drama and took part in every activity with enthusiasm. Freedom of creativity is an area of importance for Henrietta and being able to choose her characters and her actions made the process a lot more engaging:

*I liked the drama quite a bit cos it was just...we could do what we felt like with the drama and we could be creative with the seasickness and that was fun. And I also quite liked the hot seating and doing that.*

She also enjoyed the writing aspect, not only because it is an area of strength but because she could further share ideas that there was not time for in the drama:

*Yeah it was pretty good cos you could just write down your thoughts on what you did...because sometimes you didn't get to share everything.*

Henrietta is an enthusiastic writer, so when she penned her first sample it was eloquent and almost completely grammatically correct, save a few missing commas. She was writing a diary entry from Elsie's point of view, and showed good emotion:

*When I'm on the 6th step down I hear endless groaning as I move down it becomes louder and louder. I can hardly bear it. I keep the words of my father's plea in my head, he needs me. Hundreds of people are bending into basins and buckets. The stench of 'you know what' fills the room there are puddles in the floor and bundles of clothes and hair.*

Henrietta's writing indicates that she has a good grasp of punctuation and descriptive writing and shows excellent comprehension of life onboard the Charlotte Jane ship. Prior to this piece of writing the class had taken part in a series of freeze frames portraying sea-sickness. Elsie's father was the doctor on-board the ship.

Henrietta's final piece of writing for the first unit was written after the process drama had finished. She put a lot of thought and planning into her writing and never got further than the first chapter. It would be better next time to allow the class extra time to complete this properly.

*People were throwing themselves onto the ground smashing their heads on the now beginning to be stained ground. The blood splattering was unbearable, I closed my eyes and covered my students'. Harry my youngest wee boy threw my hand off but I threw it*

*back on so he gave up, he knew I wouldn't. Nobody wanted to live here anymore but hurting themselves was unnecessary they were a bad influence on the students. We had to do something about it and move from this filth.*

Henrietta continues her story to include quotations and a poster that invited her characters onto the Charlotte Jane to New Zealand. She shows excellent emotion in her writing and I believe her detail showed huge improvement when describing the scene in London.

When I returned to the class to commence the second data collection I was disappointed to learn that Henrietta would only be with us for a week because of a family holiday. She was keen on the Canterbury Earthquake drama and learnt a lot during that week and because of her prior writing skills it turned out that she was still able to complete the narrative at the end of the unit with a certain amount of ease.

The class were introduced to a number of strategies during the second unit designed to make writing easier. One of these was a quick-write which involved the students noting down anything that came into their head based on prior knowledge and a pretext activity I ran with them. It was interesting to see that of all Henrietta learnt over the second teaching unit, it was this that stood out the most:

*um... I'll remember the quick-write because I haven't planned like that before and so it will be easy.*

Henrietta's initial piece of writing using her prior knowledge was entertaining and ran over a number of pages in her book as she was so dedicated to the task. The amount she was writing had improved and her enthusiasm was showing great gains as the drama commenced. The following is only a short sample of Henrietta's written work:

*Sitting uncomfortably on a bunk is where this shaky story begins. Surrounded by the chatter and laughter of my friends on the opposite bunks. Safe, that's what I thought I was but in reality I was about as safe as a rabbit surrounded by a pack of wolves. Just arrived back from coasteering and jumping off almost dangerously high rocks climbing up from the jagged edge was the hardest, but now here I was sitting uncomfortably on a top bunk giggling, chattering & daydreaming with my pals. In a snap my thoughts were interrupted by a soft rumbling a bit like a car engine but then as if it was coming nearer it became louder. With a ROAR! It was accompanied by strong shaking.*

Reading this sample we can see Henrietta has written quickly and begun to repeat herself in some moments. However, the description is strong and detailed showing a clear understanding of the task and a keenness to write.

It was interesting during the final interview to hear Henrietta explain what her favourite part of the teaching unit. She voted recounts (like the one above) as being the most interesting to write but indicated she had not always liked them:

*I didn't used to like recounts...because they're so boring!*

As mentioned earlier, Henrietta made it clear she did not enjoy being given limitations in her writing and felt her change in attitude to the recounts was:

*because you could change it a bit*

Unfortunately during the interview process Henrietta's answers tended to get lost as Frank and Julian were far more vocal, but she got her point across.

Overall Henrietta did not make many improvements to the surface features of her writing. She was a strong speller to begin with and has a vast knowledge of punctuation. She still needs to improve her use of paragraphs. The biggest change to Henrietta's writing came in her attitude and the amount that she was able to write. While Henrietta said she didn't enjoy being given limitations to write within, the drama did in fact provide these. The class wrote on set topics which followed dramatisations. However, the appeal was in the fun of the lessons and the inspiration it provided to 'want' to write, and this is where Henrietta's learning journey showed the most progress.

These journeys have indicated a notable improvement in the motivation of Julian, Frank and Henrietta. Whilst Chapter Six showed little difference in their use of surface features through the creative teaching unit, the drama has clearly impacted upon their engagement during written tasks and the imagination and deeper features of their writing. All three students have given positive feedback on the unit and during interviews and journal entries have commented on personal changes to their views of writing.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Implications

*Perhaps no academic task is as susceptible to the influences of motivation...as writing*

(Troia, 2011, p. 51)

This research has investigated and reported the teaching of writing in a creative context and examined its impact on the motivation and engagement of students in a Year Five and Six classroom in a New Zealand school. Changes in selected surface and deeper features of writing were also monitored during the teaching for six case study participants working across the continuum of writing levels in the classroom.

The current education system has placed considerable importance on the areas of reading, writing and mathematics, with writing highlighted to be the “most neglected” of these subjects (Troia, 2011). The Ministry of Education has also made reference to the suggested causes of falling results in writing being a lack of interest and knowledge in the area (Ministry of Education, 2012c), with formal writing tasks tending to demotivate children quickly, and resulting in unimaginative and unfinished writing. Troia (2011) argues that, while writing requires “thoughtful planning and skilful execution” it demands motivations to “expend effort [and] to persist” (p. 51). Similarly, Brophy (2010) suggests that if students are motivated they will learn at an increased rate. The current findings also indicate a connection between motivation and writing skill by showing growth in the development of specific writing features as the result of a creative teaching programme. This research used drama as a teaching pedagogy in which a series of lessons were planned based on set topics and then interspersed with writing activities. The drama created a context for the students to become involved and through this motivated them into better understanding the task. Dennison (2011) suggests that drama, when used in teaching, can help to model and scaffold students’ understanding and direct them towards richer outcomes, engaging them as they explore roles and question not only themselves but the events happening around them. The drama strategies were also used to assist the planning of the writing tasks in order to inspire the students’ thinking and allow them to increase not only the amount they were writing but their level of interest when doing so.



Chapter Two cites McNaughton who indicates that drama in primary schools is now not seen as a subject in itself which gives an outcome but rather as a method of helping students to learn when integrated within other areas (McNaughton, 1997). The creative context in which drama was used, enabled the students to learn about their local history more effectively and produce richer writing. As outlined in Chapter One, drama in education is a mode of learning and through active identification with imagined roles and situations in drama, students can learn to explore issues, events and relationships (Lambert & O'Neill, 1990, p. 11), and will write with more imagination when in role (Greenwood, 2010). The New Zealand Curriculum also argues the benefits of drama suggesting that students who work with drama techniques learn to communicate more confidently and with increasing control (Ministry of Education, 2007d).

In response to perceived falling levels in writing, the Ministry of Education has indicated that a focus on assessment and reporting back to parents is a priority for schools (Ministry of Education, 2009a). In reference to these initiatives, this research also included a further focus on how the National Standards could be used in an authentic classroom situation to analyse students' writing in order to show comparison and improvement within surface and deeper features and whether they could be incorporated easily into writing assessment in a reliable and valid manner. For this a workable framework was provided that intended to meet the requirements of reporting the standards in writing using a creative teaching approach. While integrating the National Standards into classroom assessment is a challenging topic for many teachers, the findings of this research show that with creative methods the analysis of student results following the Standard's expectations can be easily achieved.

My role in this study was that of a participant observer. As outlined in Chapter One, the research was practitioner-based and involved the collection of written work, interviews and observations in order to analyse student response to the teaching units I facilitated. As can be seen in Chapters Four and Five I was involved actively in each lesson through either teacher-in-role, engaged in the process with the students or in the position of facilitator organising the flow of each session. As the students worked independently for a number of the tasks I was also able to record daily observations based on responses to the drama. While there are a number of drama experts with strong knowledge and passion in the field (for example O'Toole, 2002; O'Connor 2007; Greenwood, 2011), many classroom teachers are unaware of the methodologies of drama and

how to use it effectively in their classrooms. As a teacher who has received no formal training in the area of drama I intended for this research to bridge the gap of understanding other educators have with using drama in the primary classroom and bring it within reach.

The teaching units were based around topics the class were already studying that aligned with the underlying theme of Christchurch history and sustainability. The first unit involved using drama to understand the experiences of the pioneers as they made the voyage from Portsmouth to Lyttelton. During this process students were engaged in a variety of roles and used a number of drama strategies such as freeze frames and hot seating to further explore the characters and historical event they were learning about. The process drama acted as a scaffold for the writing activities that followed. The students used subject-specific vocabulary to construct conversations while in role and developed the story themselves based on actual events that I inserted into each lesson throughout the course of the drama. The second unit followed a similar path but focused on a more contemporary Christchurch and events that occurred following the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. The students were in role as local business owners and needed to construct a process drama determining how they could sustain employment after losing their buildings to rubble. As I collected data from each session I was able to record and report on how student motivation levels changed according to the process.

As outlined in Chapter Three, this thesis followed a case study approach documenting my involvement with one class in one school, in which the whole class took part throughout the research to avoid the probable disruption of extracting smaller groups. Working with the whole class also enabled me to teach the units as part of the classroom writing timetable and allow the teacher release time. The participants in the study were Year Five and Six students who were learning at a variety of levels. Although I began the study with the intention of focusing on students struggling with the writing process, I found through working with the class that higher ability students, while more proficient in the use of writing strategies, still require assistance with motivation levels. Therefore, I expanded my research to include a focus on all three levels of working towards, at and above national expectations.

Existing literature suggests there are a number of researchers who have studied the benefits of integrating drama into a curriculum programme. In Chapter Two I outlined the work of Dennison (2011) who is an advocate for using drama as a stimulant for scaffolding writing ideas through

improvisation and has supplied other educators with process dramas based on known fairytales. I also made reference to the work of Lin (2010) and Baraldi (2009) who both used drama as a way of igniting student ideas and creating a more conducive environment for learning.

Further studies have been made into the use of drama in different contexts, like that of O'Connor (2007) who used process drama as a way of changing the attitudes of workers in the metal health system; and Baskerville (2010) who wanted to study the effects of drama on the tolerance and empathy of youths in a rehabilitation facility.

As my research has been in New Zealand I included a focus on two recent works by New Zealand researchers studying the effects of drama on student achievement. Marino (2012) focused on using drama to create a context for writing and Greenwood and Sæbo (2011) tracked the use of interactive, creative and aesthetic approaches to teaching and learning and how they may be adapted to cross-curricular teaching, with a particular focus on the improvement of reading levels.

The above researchers all provided evidence that drama is an effective tool for learning and argued its benefits within a variety of contexts. However, I have found that the areas of motivation and engagement have not been looked at extensively in any of these studies which has led to my interest in the area. Through this thesis I have been able to show that while drama can absolutely aid learning through more focused understanding, it also plays a large role in improving the motivation of students.

In earlier chapters I made reference to a lack of motivation being the possible cause for a weakness in writing across many countries resulting in the subsequent inclusion of National Standards in the New Zealand education system (Graves, 1994). This thesis has suggested practical ways the National Standards can be used in a classroom context to analyse student writing in response to these requirements and presented a workable format for other educators to use. Through the use of a systematic analysis I assessed participants' writing samples looking specifically at the surface and deeper features of writing in association with the National Standards. To attain inter-rater reliability the classroom teacher analysed a sample of the students' work using the same process of assessment. When added to my own, her results showed a strong consistency between our marking, indicating the process we used was reliable and valid.

I approached this study as an emergent researcher following practitioner-based methods. Through focusing on the impact of a creative teaching approach I wished to extend my own learning as well

as contribute to existing literature and provide teachers with more knowledge to develop better education for students through the integration of drama and writing. As a teacher I received training to enter the classroom in all curriculum areas as well as in-school experiences. However, I was not an expert in any one area and any subsequent training I wanted in the area of drama was up to me to pursue. In order to complete this research I have had to research and experience drama myself and learn with the students in order to extend my own knowledge. I discovered that using drama does increase understanding and therefore learning, and while motivating students it has also made teaching a far more enjoyable experience as the students are engaged in the task and interested in exploring more about a given topic.

Through facilitating the teaching units I became more aware of my own teaching methods as well as the responses of students to the lessons, enabling me to reflect on future learning opportunities for myself. A factor that continued to arise throughout the sessions that will implicate my teaching of drama in the future is that of *time*. In the classroom, every day is planned according to the set structure of lessons and breaks at regular intervals. When coming to understand drama and how to use it efficiently in the classroom to gain results it has become apparent that learning should not be impeded by time. For example O'Toole and Dunn (2002) assert that "good drama tends to be rather slow and low key" (p. 10) and a slower pace will result in more interest and students "building more belief" in the drama itself and their roles. I frequently fell short of the time needed to complete writing tasks and activities and learnt there is a strong need in drama for flexibility when it comes to planning. Process drama has the purpose of allowing discovery and inquiry as well as teaching important concepts to students, and as a teacher this took some adjusting to.

While adding to my repertoire of skills as a teacher and finding ways of increasing student motivation through drama I also learnt to adapt and extend my methods of assessment to incorporate the National Standards. As referred to throughout this thesis, the Standards are the Ministry of Education's initiative requiring teachers to analyse student work in reading, writing and mathematics and report back to parents regularly in order to "raise achievement...identify children who are falling behind, to help parents help their children, and help schools to focus on what they need to do" (Hekia Parata, 28.09.12; Ministry of Education, 2012b). Through experience I know that many educators were initially apprehensive at the inclusion of the National Standards

into the New Zealand education system and overwhelmed at how to adapt them easily into their classrooms. This research has required me to look specifically at the Standards and their expectations and devise ways of using them to analyse student work. Through trial and error I created a systematic way of assessing the surface and deeper features of the samples of writing I collected, and compared them across time to show student movement over the duration of the study. Being able to use these methods has enabled me to see benefits in the National Standards and I hope this thesis extends that view to other educators. As I outlined in Chapter One, although the National Standards are focused on the three main areas of learning, they also promote reading and writing as “interactive tools to meet specific learning purposes across the curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 2009a).

In order to gain evidence for this study I collected data from all participants involved. As mentioned in Chapter One this data came in the form of interviews, observations, writing samples and journal entries written daily by the students. In Chapter Six I asserted that the teaching units used drama explicitly to inspire motivation within writing. I provided tables which analysed participants’ results to show that this had occurred and linked the outcomes of the tables to engagement in the writing tasks as a direct result of their experiences during the process dramas. The most notable improvement was in the amount written by all six of the participants, with their use of emotive language and subject-specific vocabulary also showing considerable increase. The drama was a way of scaffolding and planning the writing, enabling students to write more fluently because they had a stronger understanding of the deeper features of writing.

In this thesis I focused on the personal learning journeys of three students working respectively at the levels of towards, at and above national expectations, from whom I collected personal feedback from interviews as well as the aforementioned data from their writing. As can be read in Chapter Seven, all three students indicated that their enjoyment of writing had improved as a result of the incorporation of drama in each lesson, and two of the students were certain they were producing richer writing that was longer and more imaginative. I also tabulated the writing sample results of those students with another three students working at the same three levels in the curriculum to show comparison. All six students displayed improvement in the amount they wrote suggesting that their increased motivation in writing through the teaching units directly affected their engagement in the task.

The tables were also used to compare movement in surface and deeper features of writing over time in accordance with New Zealand education expectations. When analysing deeper features in the students' writing all six students displayed significant improvements in their use of emotive language, and four of the six showed improvements in their use of subject-specific vocabulary. This can also be attributed to engagement in the drama where subject-specific dialogue was a daily part of the process.

While there was definite movement in the students' use of deeper features their level of improvement on surface feature characteristics indicated limited progress. Because the teaching units had focused more on improving student motivation there was little explicit teaching on the surface features of writing other than that of speech marks. I included this area as it was a requirement in the writing genres for both teaching units. Through freeze framing the students recorded their dialogue and added it to a comic strip that is discussed in Chapter Five, then following this was a session on speech marks and how to include them correctly in a piece of writing. While taught deliberately, the single lesson did not appear to be sufficient, as only two of the six participants displayed knowledge of speech marks in their written work. The surface feature results suggest that the lack of explicit teaching in this area resulted in limited movement while the targeted area of motivation changed considerably, proposing that students require deliberate modelling and instruction to learn new strategies. (Ministry of Education, 2006a).

As Chapter Six suggested, the added motivation that arose from the creative teaching units enabled the students to write more fluently and many significantly increased the length of their writing as they grew in understanding of the tasks. While not a prominent aspect of this research, it also appeared that the students' writing flowed more naturally, a possible cause being the added inspiration they discovered through the incorporation of the drama units.

Although this research has provided a number of implications for teaching, the most prominent of these is to use a range of creative methods to motivate the students and encourage them to write freely and with imagination.

Creative methods can include a wide range of artistic or visual indicators for students, for example the use of pictures to recall knowledge into a subject area. Parkhill and her colleagues, for instance, report the success of a project that incorporates popular movies with text, In the AVAILLL (audio visual achievement in literacy language and learning) programme (Parkhill, Johnson, &

Bates, 2011). They reported a marked increase in motivation to read and also in reading achievement in response to the programme. In this research I employed drama as a source of inspiration and introduced a range of techniques that suggested children are enabled to write more easily by getting into role and empathising with characters. In addition to this, students will understand the thought process the characters have gone through and can assimilate with situations to describe their stories more imaginatively through a range of language features. These creative methods involve expressive dialogue and allow the inclusion of subject-specific vocabulary more naturally in the drama which can then be used by the students in role and in turn act as a scaffold for their writing. Working alongside a teacher in role provides a context for students to feel their imaginations and ideas are valued and encouraged and they and the teacher feel a more collaborative relationship (McNaughton, 1997).

Although the process dramas in the teaching units allowed for group collaboration as the class developed their characters, the writing was generally completed individually. There was a need for students to develop their own ideas, yet a large amount of time was spent on sharing and editing their writing with a partner. This was a significant motivator for the class who enjoyed reading their work out loud and it was encouraging to see how this increased over time. However, while collaboration is important in learning, literature shows it is still vital that students can individually critique their own work in order to improve (Smith & Elley, 1997). This suggests a field for further inquiry.

While this research has identified drama as being a contributor to motivation in writing and outlined strategies that could be adapted and used within any classroom situation there is always room for further study. Earlier in this chapter I acknowledged that narrative flow was not a prominent aspect of this study and therefore I made no analysis or comparison on student outcomes in this area. A further study might explore this. The results of this study have also established implications for future research in the area of increasing student critical awareness in order for them to take more ownership for the development of their writing.

This thesis has proposed that drama contains strong links to the improvement of writing, simply by increasing motivation levels. The students who took part in this research all agreed that the drama was inspiring and they wanted to write more because of it. Analysis indicated that those students learning below the required level of National Standards showed vast improvement in not only the

amount they wrote but also consideration for editing and sharing with an audience. Those for whom writing was not a difficult area also responded positively to the drama and expanded many ideas within their writing, displaying excellent empathy for characters involved in the drama, and written improvements in how they described characters and situations. So from these findings it can be suggested that teachers who use drama more efficiently in their classroom will result in more motivation from their students leading to stronger outcomes and understanding of the task. However, in order to influence change across all aspects of writing, explicit teaching methods are still required.

The collection and analysis of data in this research also shows there are implications for the National Policy which provides teachers with a curriculum of broad standards to be used as indicators for assessment. While aiming for a similar outcome there is no teacher, classroom or school that operates in exactly the same manner. The National Standards are there only as a system of guidance to allow teachers to choose what works for them and how to use them to grade the levels their students are achieving at. There needs to be an understanding that instead of getting weighed down with questioning the standards' practicality and effectiveness, teachers can instead make the standards work for their own classroom and their own students.

This research sought to show the significant impact that drama can have on the motivation of writing. As a classroom teacher I have been able to reflect on my own methodology for education and adapted it to meet student needs by asking children how they like to learn. Through injecting drama into our curriculum, not just as a subject area but as a whole approach to learning, I believe we can make a difference to our students and the way they learn. This study has identified and added to existing literature by describing ways in which drama can be adapted within an authentic classroom by a teacher who is not a drama specialist. It has also given an example of a systematic writing analysis that could be modified by teachers for use in their own classrooms to assess and report to parents more comprehensively in alignment with current New Zealand National Standard's requirements. The overall intention of this research was to relay to other educators that the written word can be played with to ensure an extensive and enjoyable education for our students. Inclusion of a detailed analysis demonstrating the benefits of drama and the identification of a number of theorists who also believe in the advantages of a drama/writing programme gives cause to the question: *should our curriculum be more focused on enhancing*



*student motivation to learn?* The addition of the National Standards in our education system is changing the way we assess and report to parents, and this research has indicated that even with their focus on the three main learning areas, there is still a way of meeting National Standards requirements in a creative context. However, there is room for more change in the National Policy with a spotlight on motivation as well as achievement. If we are to help students realise their full potential then all aspects of education must become a focus, including the benefits of learning through creative methods.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Teaching Unit

#### Planning for New Zealand Pioneers Teaching Unit

Term 1 2012 Room X

Drama/Writing

Adele Staples

Curriculum Area	Learning Outcomes
<b>Drama</b>	<p><b>Strands covered:</b> Level 3</p> <p><b>Students will:</b></p> <p><b>PK:</b> Explore the elements of role, focus, action, tension, time, and space through dramatic play.</p> <p><b>DI:</b> Contribute and develop ideas in drama, using personal experience and imagination.</p> <p><b>CI:</b> Share drama through informal presentation and respond to ways in which drama tells stories and conveys ideas in their own and others' work.</p> <p><b>Pretext:</b> Using fictional artifacts to encourage inquiry into the lives of passengers onboard the 'Charlotte Jane'.</p> <p><b>Key roles:</b></p> <p><b>Students:</b> Creating their own characters and identities to match the situation they will be portraying.</p> <p><b>Teacher-in-role:</b> Creating four different characters to continue the understanding of the passage of the pioneers.</p>
<b>English</b>	<p><b>Speaking, writing and presenting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and use sources of information, processes, and strategies with some confidence to identify, form, and express ideas.</li> <li>• Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.</li> <li>• Use language features appropriately, showing some understanding of their effects.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise texts using a range of structures.</li> </ul> <p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create characters and portray life onboard the 'Charlotte Jane' using freeze framing, hot-seating and inquiry through questioning.</li> <li>Present freeze frames to show moments in time on the ship which will indicate their level of learning.</li> <li>Write daily using a range of formats.</li> </ul> <p><b>Listening, reading and viewing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate sources of information, processes, and strategies with developing confidence to identify, form, and express ideas.</li> <li>Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.</li> <li>Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.</li> </ul> <p><b>Students will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen to given information on the NZ Pioneers and reorganise it into dramatic form.</li> <li>View others' freeze frames and presentations and give critical feedback based on knowledge they will learn.</li> </ul>
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Session Learning and Tasks	Key Questions/considerations	tools
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Motivation Chart</i></li> <li>Discussion to gather prior knowledge of New Zealand Pioneers.</li> <li>Introduce fact that they were from UK.</li> <li>Introduce fictional character 'Elsie' who travelled on the Charlotte Jane to NZ. Produce special case of artifacts for children to look at and discuss – what sort of person was Elsie – why might she have gone to NZ.</li> </ol>	<p>What do we know about the NZ Pioneers?</p> <p>What was happening in England in 1850?</p> <p>Can we name the first four ships to NZ?</p> <p>Who were the two types of people travelling to NZ on the first four ships?</p> <p>When and why was the Treaty of Waitangi signed?</p>	<p><i>Portmanteau of artifacts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lace handkerchief</li> <li>'Diamond' brooch</li> <li>Diary Entries</li> <li>Advertisement</li> <li>Table cloth</li> <li>Toilet bag</li> </ul>

<p>5. Teacher-in-role as Elsie, a wealthy English, doctor's daughter – children to question to find out more.</p> <p>6. <b>Written Task:</b> Character brainstorm of Elsie.</p> <p>7. <i>Complete student journal.</i></p>		<p>Elsie's Scarf</p> <p>Children's books</p>
<p>1. <i>Motivation Chart</i></p> <p>2. Complete writing Questionnaire to gather children's opinions on writing.</p> <p>3. Introduce posters/ad showing poor life in UK compared to happy, well-fed life in NZ.</p> <p>4. Split class into family groups, ½ Colonists and ½ emigrants. Creating character identities.</p> <p>5. Teacher-in-role as Edward Wakefield, co-founder of the NZ Company. Children to question in role, why should they go to NZ.</p> <p>6. <b>Written Task:</b> Create advertisement to encourage emigration to NZ.</p> <p>7. <i>Complete Journal entry.</i></p>	<p>Why would an advertisement show life in the UK as being hungry and poor and the opposite in NZ?</p> <p>Who was Edward Gibbon Wakefield?</p>	<p>Writing Questionnaires</p> <p>Advertisement 'here and there'</p> <p>Edward's Hat</p> <p>Children's books</p>
<p>1. <i>Motivation Chart.</i></p> <p>2. Begin with Teacher-in-role to meet Henry – an emigrant from Ireland. Children questioning to discover background.</p> <p>3. In family groups, freeze framing the walk onto the ship. Tap to hear thoughts, eg fear, excitement and why.</p> <p>4. Introduce first cue cards, one from steerage and one from cabin to show comparison.</p> <p>5. Create freeze frames in groups using cue cards.</p> <p>6. <b>Written task:</b> diary entry, first day on board – from point of view of their</p>	<p>Where does Henry come from?</p> <p>Why is he travelling on the ship?</p> <p>Did Henry pay for his ticket? Why/why not?</p>	<p>Henry's Coat</p> <p>Cue Cards</p> <p>Children's books</p>

character.		
7. <i>Journal Entry</i>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Motivation Chart.</i></li> <li>2. Perfect freeze framing. How do we do it, what's important. Practise seasickness frames.</li> <li>3. Use cue card to practise freeze frame then continue the scene with extra freeze frames showing the passing of time. Tap to hear children's thoughts as they are in role.</li> <li>4. <b>Written task:</b> Diary entry from Elsie's point of view.</li> <li>5. <i>Journal entry.</i></li> </ol>	<p>What do we need to remember when creating a freeze frame?</p> <p>What is the purpose of creating freeze frames?</p>	<p>Cue Cards</p> <p>Children's Books</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Motivation Chart.</i></li> <li>2. Improvisation in family groups – portraying life on board.</li> <li>3. Cue cards – creating freeze frames and continuing each scene to show passing of time.</li> <li>4. <b>Written Task:</b> Adding another entry to Elsie's diary.</li> <li>5. <i>Journal Entry.</i></li> </ol>	<p>How did families spend daily life on-board the ships?</p>	<p>Cue Cards</p> <p>Children's Books</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Motivation Chart.</i></li> <li>2. <b>Lesson</b> on punctuation focusing on quotation marks.</li> <li>3. Freeze frames to show daily life on board the ship.</li> <li>4. Teacher-in-role as new character Mr Abernathy, an American tea plantation owner from Jamaica – heading to NZ in search of gold.</li> <li>5. Cue card incorporating Mr Abernathy and Elsie – stretch out of a series of frames to show passing of time.</li> <li>6. <b>No written task today.</b></li> <li>7. <i>Journal Entry.</i></li> </ol>	<p>Why would Mr Abernathy be emigrating to NZ?</p> <p>What do we now know about passengers on the Charlotte Jane?</p>	<p>Whiteboard</p> <p>Mr Abernathy's Jacket</p> <p>Cue Cards</p> <p>Children's Books</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Motivation Chart.</i></li> <li>2. Hot-seating, children in role as boat passenger, rest of class asking questions to gain information.</li> <li>3. Introduce 'The Cockroach' the newspaper passengers developed on the Charlotte Jane.</li> <li>4. <b>Lesson</b> on writing a transaction text (ie a newspaper article)</li> <li>5. Children brainstorming interesting articles to write and drafting them out.</li> <li>6. <i>Journal Entry.</i></li> </ol>	<p>What is the purpose of hot-seating?</p> <p>What is important to remember when in the hot-seat?</p> <p>What is required/important when writing a newspaper article?</p>	<p>Chair for 'Hot-seat'</p> <p>Whiteboard</p> <p>Newspaper examples</p> <p>Children's books</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Motivation Chart.</i></li> <li>2. Hot-seating more children-in-role as their characters.</li> <li>3. Continue drafting and editing newspaper articles.</li> <li>4. In groups, pool articles and create own versions of 'the Cockroach'.</li> <li>5. <i>Journal Entry.</i></li> </ol>		<p>Chair for 'Hot-seat'</p> <p>Children's books</p> <p>Large paper for newspapers</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Motivation Chart.</i></li> <li>2. Photographs: children in characters showing freeze frames as a group photograph over three scenarios: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boarding the ship</li> <li>• After a month on board</li> <li>• Arriving in Lyttelton.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. <b>Learning session</b> about the Pioneers arrival in NZ – freeze frames to incorporate learning.</li> <li>4. <i>Journal Entry.</i></li> </ol>	<p>How would the passengers be feeling in each of these scenarios?</p> <p>How can we portray that feeling?</p> <p>When did the Charlotte Jane arrive in Lyttelton?</p> <p>What was waiting for the passengers when they arrived?</p>	<p>Children's books</p>

## Appendix B: Interview Sample

Interview with Children taken at the conclusion of first teaching unit

– *sample taken from middle of interview*

*(note: Children's names have been changed)*

**R:** Ok, fabulous, well what did you all think about the drama that we did? And honest thoughts...

**Frank:** I really...

**R:** You won't hurt my feelings!

**Frank:** I really loved the drama, there was nothing bad about it and, cos I really enjoyed doing the freeze frames with you and because it gave people a chance to see what we were thinking and how we felt.

**Henrietta:** I liked the, well, I like the freeze frames too, but sometimes I wished that we did like skits just full through and then we could do the answers and everything.

**R:** Mmhmmm (nodding)

**Julian:** I, I liked the drama quite a bit cos it was just, we could do what we felt like with the drama and what we, and we could be creative with the seasickness and that was fun. And I also quite liked the hotseating and doing that.

**R:** Ok.

**Frank:** And I felt, I also felt that with the hotseating, um we got to know more about um, the character that people were playing in the thing, um and not to go off character during it. Teach people to stay in character.

**R:** So it's sounding like the hot seating and being a character was your favourite part?

**All three:** Yeah! (nodding and smiling)

**R:** What's the hardest part then?

Pause...

**R:** Was there a hardest part!?!...

**Frank:** well it wasn't really hard...

**R:** Hope so!

**Frank:** I, the hard thing was just getting into freeze frame positions, like thinking about what we're gonna say and when we have to say it, like we might be tapped first when we might have no idea what to say.

**R:** Mmhmmm

**Henrietta:** The hard thing was actually thinking back then like what they'd be acting like, like some people when they were children they're like running around being silly when it's not exactly what a child would do

**Frank:** yeah

**Henrietta:** so it's quite hard to know, you don't really know.

## Appendix C: Writing Samples

### Writing Sample 1

Julian's first writing sample. Written in role as a narrative diary entry at the beginning of the journey on the Charlotte Jane.

Today every one was so busy like that  
was just a wedding some people  
didn't show up lucky I'm pretty  
well ~~to off~~ it was <sup>really</sup> ~~redy~~ hot so  
it made people feel <sup>worst</sup> ~~wors~~. we  
had a nice dinner

## Writing Sample 2

Julian's second writing sample. Written as a narrative story to show what he had learnt about the voyage of the Charlotte Jane over the course of the teaching unit.

100 years ago I was visiting the  
Charlotte Jane when we got on  
we found it was to surprise  
it was bigger than our house  
now we're to days in a man  
was noed over the side by a  
man now said air hot really  
it was a hot day so kids  
were swimming in the sea so he  
was saved we always get a pork for dinner  
but its good pork so I dont care  
today there is a wedding but its  
not going to be that good because  
all they want to do kiss and have  
a time and I'm not invite



### Writing Sample 3

Julian's third writing sample. Written as a narrative story, explaining what happened on the day of the earthquake.

As soon as it started shaking, I thought <sup>here</sup> help.  
We go <sup>again</sup> down but it got <sup>bigger</sup> bigger and <sup>bigger</sup> bigger.  
Mum was in town so I got <sup>worried</sup> worried. Mum took  
forever to pick me up. After <sup>two hours</sup> two hours ~~she~~ Mum picked  
me up. When we got home every thing was  
on the <sup>floor</sup> floor. Then <sup>suddenly</sup> suddenly there was another  
after <sup>shock</sup> shock but this time it was different.  
~~a hole~~ <sup>heaps</sup> ~~lot~~ <sup>heaps</sup> of <sup>liquefaction</sup> liquefaction came up from  
under the deck. Water went everywhere!  
Five <sup>minutes</sup> minutes later <sup>Dad</sup> Dad got home.

#### Writing Sample 4

Julian's fourth writing sample. Written as a narrative to explain the closing of the school due to businesses needing space after the earthquake.

The school has closed and all the busnes have  
opened and they have int had eney come  
Some of the peritnes are evin sholng thir  
all of the kids found schools so they  
were complacneing for nothing. It had a grate  
affect on the com unity.

## Appendix D: Approval of Ethics



### HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen  
Email: [human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

Ref: 2012/05/ERHEC

16 March 2012

Adele Staples  
School of Literacies & Arts in Education  
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Adele

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "Playing with the written word: examining the impact of role to improve writing in reluctant learners" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

pp 

Nicola Surtees  
**Chair**  
***Educational Research Human Ethics Committee***

*"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Ethical Clearance Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research."*